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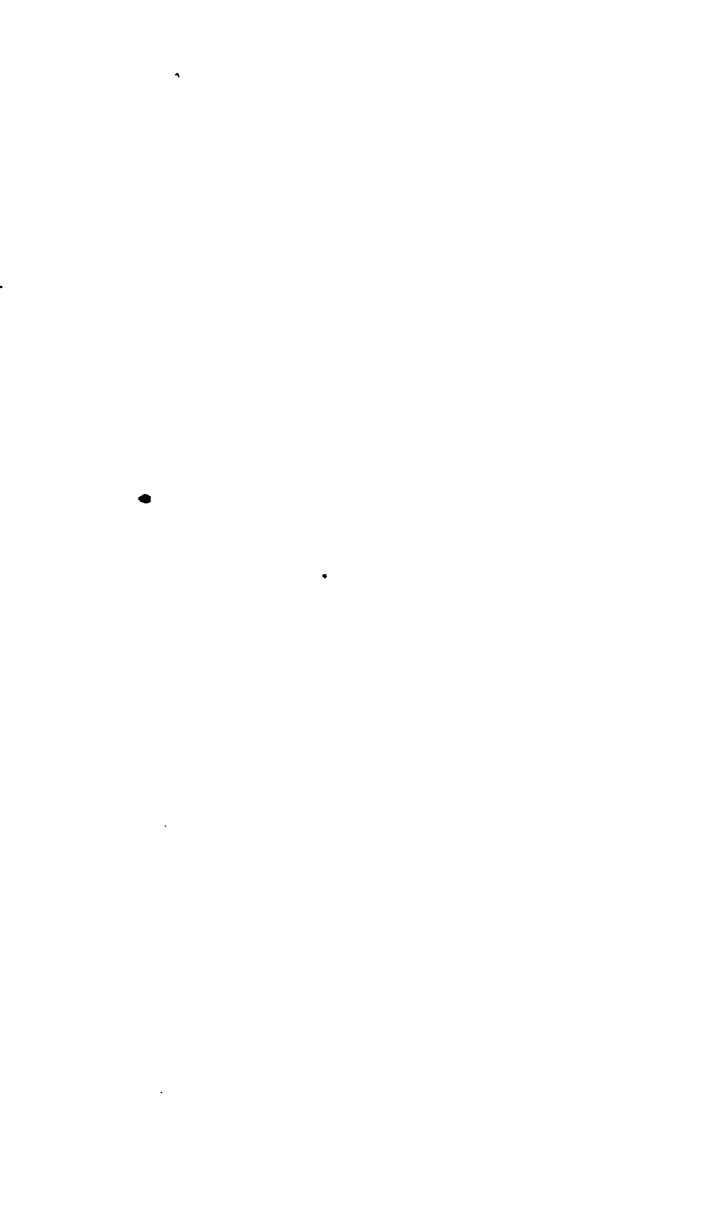
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A  
SERIOUS CALL  
TO A  
DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE,  
ADAPTED TO THE  
STATE AND CONDITION  
OF  
ALL ORDERS OF CHRISTIANS.

BY WILLIAM LAW, A. M.

A NEW EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.....Luke viii. 8.  
And behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me.  
Rev. xxii. 12.

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**SOME ACCOUNT**  
**OF THE**  
**REV. WILLIAM LAW.**

To which are subjoined, Two Letters from Clergymen in the Established Church, strongly recommending the **SERIOUS CALL**, and other works of the Author: also his Character, &c. by **EDWARD GIBBON, Esq.** the Roman Historian, and a list of all his works.

---

**THE REV. WILLIAM LAW** was born in the town of King's Cliffe, in the county of Northampton, in the year 1686; his education, and the early years of his life, were very serious; at what time he entered the University, or when he took his degree of A. M. cannot be exactly ascertained, but his leaving that place was about the year 1712: after having made great proficiency in every branch of human literature, afterwards taking the advice of our Saviour to the rich young man, he totally renounced the world, and followed Christ, in meekness, humility, and self-denial.

Mr. Law was a bachelor all his life-time: in person, he was a well set man, and rather of a dark complexion, though remarkably cheerful in his temper; such was his love of privacy, and a state of recollection, that it was very seldom indeed that he passed more than two hours in the company of any person; with a very small patrimony, he was remarkably charitable, particularly to his poor neighbours, the manufacturers of wooden ware, in and about King's Cliffe; in this benevolent disposition he was joined by the two maiden ladies, with whom he resided at King's Cliffe; their object was not to encourage the idle and dissolute, but to promote and facilitate the good intentions and endeavors of the industrious. Such also was the little value he set on money, that he gave the copies of all his works intended for publication to his bookseller; but for one of them, Messrs. Richardsons and Urquhart, insisted upon his acceptance of one hundred guineas.

We shall now relate part of what he uttered in his last illness, which was witnessed by the friend to whom

he addressed the three letters which accompany this work.—Just before his blessed soul took its happy flight, to dwell forever with the saints in bliss; the heavenly glory so opened itself in him, that he broke forth into the following exultation, which, showing the truth of his own highly regenerate state as well, as the joyful reality of the life of God in the soul of man, deserves to be written in letters of gold, not only to convince the infidel, but also to comfort and confirm the pious pilgrim, in his journey through the thorny wilderness of this world, into the peaceful regions of immortal bliss.

“Away with these filthy garments;” said this dying saint, “I feel a sacred fire kindled in my soul, which will destroy every thing contrary to itself, and burn as a flame of divine love to all eternity.”

In such a triumph of holy joy did this extraordinary servant of God resign his blessed spirit into the hands of his beloved Lord and Master, at the place of his nativity, the town of King’s Cliffe, in the county of Northampton. And in the church-yard of that parish, he lies interred, under a handsome tomb, erected to his memory, by a particular and dear friend, who lived many years with him, and therefore had long known, and highly and justly esteemed his singular worth: which was expressed in the following lines, engraved by the direction of the same friend, on the top stone of his tomb:

Here lyeth the body

OF THE LATE

**Rev. William Law, A. M.**

WHO DIED APRIL 9, 1761,

AGED 75.

He was well known to the world by a number of truly christian, pious writings, exemplified by a life spent in a manner suitable to a worthy and true disciple of his heavenly, divine, crucified Master and Saviour, Jesus

Christ, who lived and spoke in him and by him. In his younger days, he sufficiently distinguished himself, by his parts and progress in human literature. Afterwards taking the advice of our Saviour to the rich young man, he totally renounced the world and followed Christ, in meekness, humility, and self-denial. And in his last years, he was wholly absorbed in his love to God and mankind : so that virtue in him was nothing but heavenly love and heavenly flame.

In parts and sense, inferior to none,  
 With wit most amiable, with learning stored ;  
 His talents, great and high, were quite sublimed,  
 In loving God with all his heart and mind.  
 His time was all employ'd in things divine,  
 By serving God, in goodness to mankind.  
 The poor, the maim'd, the blind, have lost in him,  
 The kind protector, and the ready friend.

Some time after his decease, the following verses appeared in print :

*To the memory of that excellent man, and truly illuminated divine, the late Rev. WILLIAM LAW, A. M. These following lines are offered by one, who has received great benefits from his most valuable works.*

FAREWELL, good man ! whose great and heavenly mind,  
 In love embraced the whole of human kind ;  
 From earth's dark scene, to realms of joy and light,  
 Thy soul congenial, took her happy flight ;  
 With kindred spirits mix'd, and bright as they,  
 Thou drink'st with them the streams of endless day.  
 While we below lament thy absence most,  
 Like all true worth, then dearest, when 'tis lost.  
 Bound to no sect, to no one party tied,  
 To sons of God in every clime allied.  
 Like light's great orb, to no one realm confin'd,  
 Thy heaven-taught soul, capacious, grasp'd mankind.  
 Of pains severe, thou felt'st the tort'ring smart,  
 While grace pour'd comfort on thy better part.  
 Thy will resign'd with breath un murmuring bore,  
 Thy last sharp passage to the heavenly shore.  
 Thy heart's best image, still, thy writings, shine,  
 One spirit breathe, the dove and lamb divine.  
 Though stopt thy tongue, thy soul's strong breathings charm,  
 Though cold thy clay, thy ardent thoughts still warm.  
 Awak'd by thee, we feel the heavenly fire,

And with seraphic flames to God aspire ;  
 Thy pious zeal transfus'd to other hearts,  
 New springs of bliss, and nobler life imparts.  
 No time, no numbers, can exhaust thy mine,  
 Thy gifts are full ; posterity is thine.  
 Through future ages shall thy labours go,  
 Like streams, enriching nations as they flow ;  
 Who, while perusing, catch the sacred fire,  
 Fetch the deep sigh, and pant with strong desire,  
 For glory lost ; heaven lent thy pencil rays,  
 To paint that glory, and diffuse its blaze ;  
 Though for these days thy colors are too bright,  
 And hurt weak eyes by their too radiant light ;  
 Yet wisdom's sons, though few, to good awake,  
 Drink thy sweet spring, and bread celestial break.  
 'Midst Babel's various tongues, though thousands stray,  
 In thee, the wanderer finds his master's way.  
 In heaps let critics, commentators lie,  
 Thy works will make a Christian library.  
 In vain shall malice seek to wound thy name,  
 Or ignorance thy solid worth defame.  
 Retract your censures, you who dare be good ;  
 Confess your heads ne'er yet have understood  
 The pearls, which God to mystic sons reveal'd ;  
 From the presumptuous, wisdom's fount is seal'd.  
 Yet this her child, wants no man's pen to praise,  
 Nor slander dreads in these degenerate days ;  
 Far nobler monuments will guard his fame,  
 Deep in their breasts the good engrave his name.

The following are the remarks of Edward Gibbon, Esq. on the Rev. Mr. Law, and his works, extracted from his memoirs in 2 vols. 4to.

His words are :

" Mr. Law died at an advanced age, of a suppression of urine, in 1761, at the house of Mrs. Hesther Gibbon, known by the name of the Cliffe, in Northamptonshire, where she still resides. In that family he has left the reputation of a worthy and eminently pious man, who believed all that he professed, and practised all that he enjoined. The character of a Non-juror, which he held to the last, is a sufficient evidence of the tenaciousness of his principles in Church and State ; and the sacrifice of his interest to his conscience will be always respectable.

" His theological writings, which our domestic concerns induced me to read, preserve an amiable though

imperfect sort of life, in my opinion ; but here perhaps, I pronounce with more confidence than knowledge on the merits of the man no pen can justify. His last compositions seemed tinged too much with the mystic enthusiasm of Jacob Behmen ; and his discourse on the absolute unlawfulness of the stage may be called a ridiculous intemperance of sentiment and language.

" But these sallies of phrenzy must not extinguish the praise that is due to Mr. Law, as a wit and a scholar. His argument on topics of less absurdity is specious and acute ; his manner is lively, his style forcible and clear ; and had not the vigor of his mind been clouded by enthusiasm, he might be ranked with the most agreeable and ingenious writers of the times.

" While the Bangorian controversy was a fashionable theme, he entered the lists. He resumed the contest again with Bishop Hoadly, in which his Non-juring principles appear, though he approves himself equally to both Prelates.

" On the appearance of the " Fable of the Bees," he drew his pen against the licentiousness of the doctrine of that writer ; and Morality and Religion must rejoice in his applause and victory.

" Mr. Law's master-piece, the " Serious Call," is still read as a popular and powerful book of devotion. His precepts are rigid, but they are formed and derived from the Gospel ; his satire is sharp, but his wisdom is from the knowledge of human life ; and many of his portraits are not unworthy the pen of La Bruyere. If there yet exists a spark of piety in his reader's mind, he will soon kindle it to a flame ; and a philosopher must allow, that he is more consistent in his principles, than any of the tribe of mystic writers. He handles with equal severity and truth the strange contradiction between faith and practice in the Christian world. Under the names of Flavia and Miranda, he has admirably described Mr. Gibbon's two aunts, the worldly and the pious sisters."

Such is the character, this famous historian is compelled by the spirit of truth, to give to the piety and goodness of Mr. Law, the most eminent and original

writer of his day ; the list of his works which we now insert, together with two excellent letters from clergymen in the established Church, referring to them and him, is taken from the *Gent. Mag.* Nov. 1800.

His works are,

1. A Serious Call to a devout and holy Life, adapted to the State and Condition of all Orders of Christians, 8vo.
2. A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection, 8vo.
3. Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor, 8vo.
4. Remarks upon a late Book, entitled, "The Fable of the Bees ; or Private Vices Public Benefits." 8vo.
5. The absolute Unlawfulness of Stage Entertainments fully demonstrated, 8vo.
6. The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion, fairly and fully stated, 8vo.
7. An earnest and serious Answer to Dr. Trapp's Discourse of the Folly, Sin, and Danger, of being righteous over much, 8vo.
8. The Grounds and reasons of Christian Regeneration, 8vo.
9. A Demonstration of the gross and fundamental Errors of a late Book, called "A plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," affectionately addressed to all Orders of Men, and more especially to all the younger Clergy, 8vo.
10. An Appeal to all that doubt or disbelieve the Truths of the Gospel, 8vo.
11. The Spirit of Prayer ; or the Soul rising out of the Vanity of time into the Riches of Eternity. In Two Parts, 8vo.
12. The Spirit of Love. In Two Parts, 8vo.
13. The Way to Divine Knowledge ; being several Dialogues between Humanus, Academicus, Rusticus, and Theophilus, as preparatory to a new Edition of the Works of Jacob Behmen, and the right Use of them, 8vo.
14. A short but sufficient Confutation of the Rev. Dr. Warburton's projected Defence (as he calls it) of Christianity, in his Divine Legation of Moses. In a Letter to the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of London.
15. A Collection of Letters on the most interesting and important Subjects, and on several Occasions, 8vo.
16. Of Justification by Faith and Works ; a Dialogue between a Methodist and a Churchman, 8vo.
17. An humble, earnest, and affectionate Address to the Clergy, 8vo.

*Scarborough, December 21, 1771.*

1. " Sir,

"——Sunt certa piacula, quæ te

Ter pure lecto poterunt recreare libello."

HON.

" As I have an universal love and esteem for all mankind, so particularly for my brethren of the Established

Church, of which I should think myself an unworthy member, did I not take all opportunities of doing good, according to the abilities with which God has enabled me. But as I have ever thought a concern for men's souls to be preferable to that of their bodies, so I have, in a more especial manner, extended my charity to that better part. We live in an age wherein numerous objects present themselves to our view, that are destitute of every virtue that can make them worthy of the divine favor, and consequently there never will be wanting occasions for exercising ourselves in a laudable endeavor to their amendment. I, for my own part, though I live, (when at home) in a small country village, have had sufficient work upon my hands to bring my parishioners to any tolerable degree of piety and goodness. I preached and labored among them incessantly, and yet, after all, was convinced my work had been as fruitless as casting pearls before swine; the drunkard continued his nocturnal practices, and the voice of the swearer was still heard in our streets. However, I was determined to leave no means untried for bringing this profane and obdurate people to a sense of their duty; accordingly I purchased many religious books, and distributed them among them: but, alas! I could perceive no visible effects. In short, I had the grief to find, that all my labor had proved in vain, and was ready to cry out with St. Paul, "who is sufficient for these things?" About this time I happened to peruse a treatise of Mr. Law's, entitled, "A Serious Call to a devout and holy Life;" with which (if I may be allowed the expression) I was so charmed and greatly edified, that I resolved my flock should partake of the same spiritual food; I therefore gave to each person in my parish one of those useful books, and charged them upon my blessing (for I consider them as my children) to carefully peruse the same. My perseverance was now rewarded with success; and I had the satisfaction of beholding my people reclaimed, from a life of folly and impiety, to a life of holiness and devotion.

"Before I conclude, I must beg leave to recommend the



his friend Dr. Sherlock, in reward of the unanswerable letters to the bishop of Bangor.

“The charge of Methodism I never heard insinuated against him, and could proceed only from those, who must be totally ignorant of the tenets of that sect, or unacquainted with any among the writings of our able defender of church discipline and authority, and especially of the last except one, “on justification by Faith and Works.”

“But not to leave myself liable to reprehension for the partiality I have noticed in another, I am persuaded, that whoever has imbibed knowledge at this pure fountain will never cease thirsting while there remains a drop of the sacred spring untasted. And that every scrip of that divinely directed pen may be as extensive as the writer’s benevolence, is the ardent prayer of your sincere well-wisher,

Yours, &c.

“THEOPHILOS.”

Z. COZENS.

*The following are the Author’s Letters to a Friend.*

#### LETTER I.\*

*Worthy and dear Sir,*

My heart embraces you, with all the tenderness and affection of Christian love; and I earnestly beg of God to make me a messenger of his peace to your soul.

You seem to apprehend I may be much surprised at the account you have given of yourself. But, Sir, I am neither surprised nor offended at it. I neither condemn nor lament your state; but shall endeavor to show you how soon it may be made a blessing and happiness to you. In order to which, I shall not enter into a consideration of the different kinds of trouble you have set forth at large. I think it better to lay before you the one true ground and root, from whence all the evil and disorders of human life have sprung. This will make it easy for you to see what that is, which must and only can be the full remedy and relief for all of them, how different soever, either in kind or degree.

\* The first of these Letters was written in the year 1749, the second in the year 1750, and the last about the year 1753.

The scripture has assured us, that God made man in his own image and likeness; a sufficient proof, that man, in his first state, as he came forth from God, must have been absolutely free from all vanity, want, or distress of any kind, from any thing, either within or without him. It would be quite absurd and blasphemous to suppose, that a creature beginning to exist in the image and likeness of God, should have a vanity of life, or vexation of spirit. A God-like perfection of nature, and a painful distressed nature, stand in the utmost contrariety to one another.

Again, the Scripture has assured us, that man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery; therefore man now is not that creature that he was by his creation. The first divine and God-like nature of Adam, which was to have been immortally holy in union with God, is lost; and instead of it, a poor mortal of earthly flesh and blood, born like a wild ass's colt, of a short life, and full of misery, is, through a vain pilgrimage, to end in dust and ashes. Therefore, let every evil, whether inward or outward, only teach you this truth, that man has infallibly lost his first divine life in God; and that no possible comfort, or deliverance, is to be expected, but only in this one thing, that though man has lost his God, yet God is become man, that man may be again alive in God, as at his first creation. For all the misery and distress of human nature, whether of body or mind, is wholly owing to this one cause, that God is not in man, nor man in God, as the state of his nature requires; it is because man has lost that first life of God in his soul, in and for which he was created. He lost this light, and spirit, and life of God, by turning his desire into a tasting and sensibility of the good and evil of this earthly, bestial world.

Now here are two things raised up in man, instead of the life of God.—First; self or selfishness, brought forth by his choosing to have a wisdom of his own, contrary to the will and instruction of his Creator. Secondly; an earthly, bestial, mortal life and body, brought forth by his eating that food, which was poison to his paradisia-

cal nature. Both these must therefore be removed ; that is, a man must first totally die to self, and all earthly desires, views and intentions, before he can be again in God, as his nature and first creation requires.

But now, if this be a certain and immutable truth, that man, so long as he is a selfish, earthly minded creature, must be deprived of his true life, the life of God, the spirit of heaven in his soul ; then how is the face of things changed ; for then, what life is so much to be dreaded, as a life of worldly ease and prosperity ? what a misery, nay, what a curse is there in every thing, that gratifies and nourishes our self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking ? On the other hand, what a happiness is there in all inward and outward troubles and vexations, when they force us to feel, and know the hell, that is hidden within us, and the vanity of every thing without us ; when they turn our self love into self abhorrence, and force us to call upon God, to save us from ourselves, to give us a new life, new light, and new spirit in Christ.

O happy famine ! might the poor prodigal have well said, " which by reducing me to the necessity of asking to eat husks with swine, brought me to myself, and caused my return to my first happiness, in my father's house."

Now, sir, I will suppose your distressed state to be as you represent it ; inwardly, darkness, heaviness, and confusion of thoughts and passions ; outwardly, ill usage from friends, relations, and all the world ; unable to strike up the least spark of light or comfort, by any thought or reasoning of your own.

O happy famine, which leaves you not so much as the husk of one human comfort to feed upon ! For, my dear friend, this is the time and place for all that good and life, and salvation, to happen to you, which happened to the prodigal son. Your way is as short, and your success as certain, as his was. You have no more to do, than he had. You need not call out for books and methods of devotion ; for, in your present state, much reading, and borrowed prayers, are not your best method. All that you are to offer to God, all that is to help you to find him to be your Redeemer, is best taught and expressed by the distressed state of your heart.

Only let your present and past distress make you feel and acknowledge this two-fold great truth ; first, that in and of yourself, you are nothing but darkness, vanity, and misery. Secondly, that of yourself, you can no more help yourself to light and comfort, than you can create an angel. People, at all times, can seem to assent to these two truths, but then it is an assent that has no depth or reality, and so is of little or no use. But your condition has opened your heart, for a deep and full conviction of these truths. Now give way, I beseech you, to this conviction, and hold these two truths in the same degree of certainty, as you know two and two to be four ; and then, you are with the prodigal, come to yourself ; and above **HALF YOUR WORK IS DONE.**

Being now in the full possession of these two truths, feeling them in the same degree of certainty, as you feel your own existence, you are under this sensibility to give yourself absolutely and entirely to God in Christ Jesus, as into the hands of infinite love : firmly believing this great and infallible truth, that God has no will towards you, but that of infinite love, and infinite desire to make you a partaker of his divine nature ; and that it is as absolutely impossible for the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to refuse you all that good, which you want, as it is for you to take it by your own power.

O, sir, drink deep of this cup ; for the precious water of eternal life is in it. Turn unto God with this faith ; cast yourself into this abyss of love ; and then you will be in that state the prodigal was in, when he said, I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son ; and all that will be fulfilled in you, which is related of him.

Make this, therefore, the two fold exercise of your heart. Now, bowing yourself down before God, in the deepest sense and acknowledgment of your own nothingness and vileness ; then, looking up to God in faith and love, consider him as always extending the arms of his mercy towards you, and full of an infinite desire to dwell in you, as he dwells in the angels in heaven. Content yourself with this inward and simple exercise of your

heart, for a while ; and seek, or like nothing in any book but that which strengthens this state of your heart.

Come unto me, says the holy Jesus, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Here, my dear friend, is more for you to live upon, more light for your mind, more of unction for your heart, than in volumes of human instruction. Pick up the words of the holy Jesus, and beg of him to be the light and life of your soul. Love the sound of his name ; for Jesus is the love, the sweetness, the meekness, the compassionate goodness of the Deity itself ; which became man, that so men might have power to become the sons of God. Love, pity, and wish well to every soul in the world ; dwell in love, and then you dwell in God ; hate nothing but the evil that stirs in your own heart.

Teach your heart this prayer, till your heart continually saith, though not with outward words ; “ O holy Jesus, meek Lamb of God ! Bread that came down from heaven ! Light and life of all holy souls ! help me to a true and living faith in thee. O do thou open thyself within me, with all thy holy nature, spirit, tempers, and inclinations, that I may be born again of thee ; and be in thee a new creature, quickened and revived, led and governed, by thy holy spirit.”

Yours in all christian affection,  
W. LAW.

## LETTER II.

*My dear worthy Friend,*

*July 20.*

Whom I heartily love in the unity of the spirit of Christ. Your long letter I received some time the last month, and read with much pleasure. For, long as it was, I did not wish it to be shorter. I bless God for that good and right spirit, which breathed in every part of it.

Your judgment has failed you in nothing, but in thinking your letter would be disagreeable to me ; or that my answer was deferred on that account. Every creature has my love ; but persons of your spirit kindle in me every holy affection of honor and esteem towards them. Love with its fruits of meekness, patience, and humility is all that I wish, for myself, and every human creature.

For this is to live in God, united to him, both for time and eternity. Would you have done with error, scruple and delusion, consider the Deity (as I have said) to be the greatest love, the greatest meekness, the greatest sweetness; the eternal unchangeable will to be a good and blessing to every creature; and that all the misery, darkness and death, of fallen angels, and fallen men, consists in their having lost this divine nature. Consider yourself, and all the fallen world, as having nothing to seek or wish for, but by the spirit of prayer to draw into the life of your soul, rays and sparks of this divine, meek, loving, tender nature of God. Consider the holy Jesus as the gift of God to your soul, to begin and finish the birth of God and heaven within you, in spite of every inward or outward enemy. These three infallible truths heartily embraced, and made the nourishment of your soul, shorten and secure the way to heaven, and leave no room for error, scruple, or delusion. The poverty of our fallen nature, the depraved workings of flesh and blood, the corrupt tempers of our polluted birth in this world, do us no hurt, so long as the spirit of prayer works contrary to them, and longs for the first birth of the light and spirit of heaven.

All our natural evil ceases to be our own evil, as soon as our will-spirit turns from it; it then changes its nature, loses all its poison and death, and only becomes our holy cross, on which we happily die from self, and this world, into the kingdom of heaven.

I much congratulate you on your manner of prayer; so practised, it becomes the life of the soul, and the true food of eternity. Keep in this state of application to God, and then you will infallibly find it to be the way of rising out of the vanity of time, into the riches of eternity.

Do not expect or look for the same degrees of sensible fervor.—The matter lies not there.—Nature will have its share; but the ups and downs of that are to be overlooked.—While your will-spirit is good, and set right, the changes of creaturely fervor lessen not your union with God. It is the abyss of the heart, an unfathomable depth of eternity within us, as much above sensible

fervor, as heaven is above earth ; it is this that works our way to God, and unites us with heaven. This abyss of the heart, is the divine nature and power within us, which never calls upon God in vain, but whether helped or deserted by bodily fervor, penetrates through all outward nature, as effectually as our thoughts can leave our bodies, and reach into the regions of eternity.

I am, with hearty prayers to God for you,

Your truly affectionate friend and servant,  
W. LAW.

### LETTER III.

*My dear L——*

I am greatly rejoiced at your expressing so feeling a sense of the benefit of prayer ; and hope you will every day be more and more raised to, and united with God, by it.

I love no mysterious depths, or heights of speculation, covet no knowledge, want to see no ground of nature, grace, and creature, but so far as it brings me nearer to God, forces me to forget and renounce every thing for him, to do every thing in him, and for him ; and to give every breathing, moving, stirring intention and desire of my heart, soul, spirit, and life to him.

It is for the sake of the spirit of prayer, that I have endeavored to set so many points of religion in such a view, as must dispose the reader willingly to give up all that he inherits from his fallen father, to be all hunger and thirst after God, and have no thought or care, but how to be wholly his devoted instrument, every where, and in every thing, his adoring, joyful, and thankful servant.

When it is the one ruling, never ceasing desire of our hearts, that God may be the beginning and end, the reason and motive, of our doing or not doing, from morning to night ; then every where, whether speaking or silent, whether inwardly or outwardly employed, we are equally offered up to the eternal Spirit, have our life in him, and from him, and are united to him by that spirit of prayer, which is the comfort, the support, the strength, and security of the soul, travelling by the help of God, through the vanity of time into the riches of eternity.

My dear friend, have eyes shut and ears stopped, to every thing, that is not a step in that ladder that reaches from earth to heaven.

Reading is good, hearing is good, conversation and meditation are good; but then they are only good at times and occasions, in a certain degree; and must be used and governed with such caution, as we eat and drink, and refresh ourselves, or they will bring forth in us the fruits of intemperance.

But the spirit of prayer, is for all times, and all occasions; it is a lamp that is to be always burning, a light that is ever shining; every thing calls for it, every thing is to be done in it, and governed by it. Because it is, and means, and wills nothing else, but the totality of the soul, not doing this, or that, but wholly, incessantly given up to God, to be where, and what, and how he pleases.

This state of absolute resignation, naked faith and pure love of God, is the highest perfection and most purified life; of those who are born again from above, and through the Divine Power, become sons of God. And is neither more nor less, than what our blessed Redeemer has called and qualified us to long and aspire after, in these words, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as in heaven."

Near the conclusion of yours, you say, since your last to me, you have met with a great many trials disagreeable to flesh and blood, but that adhering to God is always your blessed relief.

Yet permit me on this occasion, to transcribe a memorandum or two, from an old scrap of paper, which has long lain by me for my own use.

1. Receive every inward and outward trouble, every disappointment, pain, uneasiness, darkness, temptation, and desolation, with both thy hands, as a true opportunity and blessed occasion, of dying to self, and entering into a fuller fellowship with thy self-denying, suffering Saviour.

2. Look at no inward, or outward trouble, in any other view, reject every other thought about it; and then every kind of trial and distress, will become the blessed day of thy prosperity.



3. Be afraid of seeking or finding comfort in any thing but God alone. For that, which gives thee comfort, takes so much of thy heart from God. “*Quid est cor purum? cui ex toto, et pure sufficit solus Deus, cui nihil sapit, quod nihil delectat, nisi Deus.*” That is, What is a pure heart? One to which God alone is totally and purely sufficient; to which nothing relishes or gives delight, but God alone.

4. That state is best, which exerciseth the highest faith in, and fullest resignation to God.

5. What is that you want and seek, but that God may be all in all in you? But how can this be, unless all creaturely good and evil, become as nothing in you and to you?

“*Oh anima mea, abstrahere te ab omnibus. Quid tibi cum mutabilibus creaturis? Solum sponsum tuum, qui omnium est author creaturarum, expectans, hoc age, ut cor tuum ille liberum et expeditum semper inveniat, quoties illi ad ipsum venire placuerit.*” That is, O my soul! withdraw thyself from all things. What hast thou to do with changeable creatures? Waiting and expecting thy bridegroom, who is the author of all creatures, let it be thy only care, that he may find thy heart free and disengaged as often, as it shall please him to visit thee.

I thank you for your kind offer about the manuscript in the sale, but have no curiosity that way. I have had all that I can have from books. I leave the rest to God. I have formerly given away many of the lives of *good Armelle*, so can have no dislike to your doing the same. I have often wished for some, or several little things of that kind, though more according to my mind; by which the meanest capacities might, in an easy manner, be led into the heart and spirit of religion.

Dear Man, adieu.

# SERIOUS CALL

TO A

## DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE.

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### CHAP. I.

#### *Concerning the Nature and Extent of Christian Devotion.*

**DEVOTION** is neither private nor public prayer ; but prayers, whether private or public, are particular parts or instances of devotion. Devotion signifies a life devoted to God.

He therefore is a devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the spirit of the world, but to the will of God ; who considers God in every thing, who serves God in every thing, who makes all the parts of his common life, parts of piety, by doing every thing in the name of God, and under such rules, as are conformable to his glory.

We readily acknowledge, that God alone is to be the object of our prayers ; that in them we are to look wholly unto him, and act wholly for him, that we are to pray in such manner, for such things, and such ends, as are suitable to his glory.

Now let any one find out the reason, why he is to be thus strictly pious in his prayers, and he will find the same as strong a reason to be as strictly pious in all the other parts of his life. For there is not the shadow of a

reason, why we should make God the object of our prayers; why we should then look wholly unto him, and pray according to his will; but what equally proves it necessary for us, to look wholly unto God, and make him the object of all the other actions of life. For any ways of life, any employment of our talents, our time or money, that is not strictly according to the will of God; that is not for such ends, as are suitable to his glory, are as great absurdities, as prayers, that are not according to the will of God. For there is no reason, why our prayers should be according to the will of God; why they should have nothing in them, but what is wise, and holy, and heavenly; there is no reason for this, but that our lives may be of the same nature; full of the same wisdom, holiness, and heavenly tempers; that we may live unto God in the same spirit, that we pray unto him. Were it not our strict duty, to live by reason, to devote all the actions of our lives to God; were it not absolutely necessary, to walk before him in wisdom, and holiness, and all heavenly conversation, doing every thing in his name, and for his glory; there would be no excellency or wisdom in the most heavenly prayers. Nay, such prayers would be absurdities; they would be like prayers for wings, when it was no part of our duty to fly.

As sure therefore, as there is any wisdom in praying for the Spirit of God; so sure is it, that we are to make that Spirit the rule of all our actions; assure, as it is our duty, to look wholly unto God in our prayers; so sure is it, that it is our duty, to live wholly unto God. But we can no more be said to live unto God, unless we live unto him in all the ordinary actions of our life; unless his will be the rule and measure of all our ways; than we can be said to pray unto God, unless our prayers look wholly unto him. So that unreasonable and absurd ways of life, whether in labour or diversion; whether they consume our time or our money; are like upreasonable and absurd prayers, and are as truly an offence unto God.

It is for want of knowing, or at least considering this, that we see such a mixture of absurdity, in the lives of many people. You see them strict as to some times and

places of devotion ; but, when the service of the church is over, they are like those, that seldom or never come there. In their way of life, their manner of spending their time and money, in their cares and fears, in their pleasures and indulgences, in their labor and diversions, they are like the rest of the world. This makes the loose part of the world generally make a jest of those, that are devout ; because they see their devotion goes no farther, than their prayers ; and that, when they are over, they live no more unto God, till the time of prayer returns again ; but in as full enjoyment of the follies of life, as other people. This is the reason, why they are the jest and scorn of careless and worldly people ; not because they are really devoted to God ; but, because they appear to have no other devotion, than that of occasional prayers.

Julius is very fearful of missing prayers ; all the parish supposes Julius to be sick, if he is not at church. But if you were to ask him why he spends the rest of his time, by humour or chance ? why he is a companion of the silliest people in their most silly pleasures ? why he is ready for every impertinent entertainment and diversion ? If you were to ask him why there is no amusement too trifling to please him ? why he is busy at all balls and assemblies ? why he gives himself up to an idle gossiping conversation ? why he lives in foolish friendships and fondness for particular persons, that neither want nor deserve any particular kindness ? why he allows himself in foolish hatreds and resentments against particular persons, without considering that he is to love every body as himself ? If you ask him why he never puts his conversation, his time, and fortune, under the rules of religion ; Julius has no more to say for himself, than the most disorderly person. For the whole tenor of Scripture lies as directly against such a life, as against debauchery and intemperance. He, that lives in such a course of idleness and folly, lives no more according to the religion of Jesus Christ, than he, that lives in gluttony, and intemperance.

If a man tell Julius that there was no occasion for so much constancy at prayers, and that he might, without

any harm to himself, neglect the service of the church, as the generality of people do; Julius would think such a one no Christian, and that he ought to avoid his company. But, if a person only tell him that he may live, as the generality of the world does; that he may enjoy himself, as others do; that he may spend his time and money, as people of fashion do; that he may conform to the follies and frailties of the generality, and gratify his temper and passions, as most people do; Julius never suspects that man to want a Christian spirit.

Yet, if Julius read all the New Testament from the beginning to the end; he would find his course of life condemned in every page.

Indeed nothing can be imagined, more absurd, in itself, than sublime and heavenly prayers added to a life of vanity and folly; where, neither labor, nor diversions; neither time, nor money, is under the direction of the wisdom and heavenly temper of our prayers. If we were to see a man, pretending to act wholly with regard to God in every thing he did, that would neither spend time, nor money, nor take any labor or diversion, but so far, as he could act according to strict principles of reason and piety; and yet, at the same time, neglect all prayer, whether public or private; should we not be amazed at such a man, and wonder, how he could have so much folly with so much religion?

Yet this is as reasonable, as for a person to pretend to strictness in devotion, to be careful of observing times and places of prayer; and yet letting the rest of his life, his time and labor, his talents and money, be disposed of, without any regard to rules of piety and devotion; for it is as great an absurdity, to suppose holy prayers, and divine petitions, without holiness of life, suitable to them, as to suppose a holy and divine life without prayers.

Let any one therefore think, how easily he could confute a man, that pretended to great strictness of life without prayer, and the same arguments will as plainly confute another, that pretends to strictness of prayer, without carrying the same strictness into every other part of

life. For to be weak and foolish in spending our time and fortune, is no greater a mistake, than to be weak and foolish in relation to our prayers. To allow ourselves in any ways of life, that neither are, nor can be offered to God, is the same irreligion, as to neglect our prayers.

The short of the matter is this, either reason and religion prescribe rules and ends to all the ordinary actions of our life, or they do not. If they do, then it is as necessary, to govern our actions by those rules, as it is to worship God. For, if religion teaches us any thing concerning eating and drinking, or spending our time and money; if it teaches us, how we are to use and condemn the world; if it tells us, what temper we are to have in common life; how we are to be disposed toward all people; how we are to behave toward the sick, the poor, the old, and destitute; if it tells us, whom we are to treat with particular love, whom we are to regard with particular esteem; if it tells us, how we are to treat our enemies, and how we are to mortify and deny ourselves; he must be very weak, that can think these parts of religion are not to be observed with as much exactness, as any doctrine, that relates to prayer.

It is very observable, that there is not one command in all the gospel for public worship; and perhaps it is a duty, that is less insisted on in scripture, than any other. The frequent attendance at it is never so much as mentioned in all the New Testament. Whereas that religion or devotion, which is to govern the ordinary actions of our life, is to be found in almost every verse of scripture. Our blessed Saviour and his apostles are wholly taken up in doctrines, that relate to common life. They call us to renounce the world, and differ in every temper and way of life, from the spirit and way of the world. To renounce all its goods, to fear none of its evils, to reject its joys, and have no value for its happiness. To be, as new born babes, that are born into a new state of things; to live, as pilgrims in spiritual watching, in holy fear and heavenly aspiring after another life. To take up our daily cross, to deny ourselves, to profess the blessedness

of mourning, to seek the blessedness of poverty of spirit. To forsake the pride and vanity of riches, to take no thought for the morrow, to live in the profoundest state of humility, to rejoice in worldly sufferings. To reject the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life ; to bear injuries, to forgive and bless our enemies, and to love mankind, as God loveth them. To give up our whole hearts and affections to God, and strive to enter through the strait gate into a life of eternal glory.

This is the common devotion, which our blessed Saviour taught, in order to make it the common life of all Christians. Is it not therefore strange, that people place so much piety in the attendance of public worship, concerning which there is not one precept of our Lord's to be found ; and yet neglect the common duties of ordinary life, which are commanded in every page of the gospel ? I call these duties the devotion of our common life, because, if they are to be practised, they must be made parts of our common life ; they can have no place any where else.

If contempt of the world, and heavenly affection, is a necessary temper of Christians ; it is necessary, that this temper appear in the whole course of their lives ; in their manner of using the world, because it can have no place any where else.

If self-denial be a condition of salvation ; all, that would be saved, must make it a part of their ordinary life. If humility be a Christian duty ; then the common life of a Christian is to be a constant course of humility in all its kinds. If poverty of spirit be necessary ; it must be the spirit and temper of every day of our lives. If we are to relieve the naked, the sick, and the prisoner ; it must be the common charity of our lives as far, as we are able to perform it. If we are to love our enemies ; we must make our common life a visible exercise and demonstration of that love. If content and thankfulness ; if the patient bearing of evil be duties to God ; they are the duties of every day, and in every circumstance of life. If we are to be wise and holy, as new-born sons of

God ; we can no otherwise be so, than by renouncing every thing, that is foolish and vain, in every part of our common life. If we are to be in Christ new creatures ; we must show that we are so, by having new ways of living in the world. If we are to follow Christ ; it must be in our common way of spending every day.

Thus it is in all the virtues and holy tempers of Christianity ; they are not ours, unless they be the virtues and tempers of our ordinary life. So that Christianity is so far from leaving us to live in the common ways of life, conforming to the folly of customs, and gratifying the passions and tempers, which the spirit of the world delights in ; it is so far from indulging us in any of these things, that all its virtues, which it makes necessary to salvation, are only so many ways of living above and contrary to the world in all the common actions of our life. If our common life is not a common course of humility, self-denial, renunciation of the world, poverty of spirit, and heavenly affection ; we do not live the lives of Christians.

But, though it is plain, that this and this alone is Christianity, a uniform, open, and visible practice of all these virtues ; yet it is as plain, that there is little or nothing of this to be found, even among the better sort of people. You see them often at church, and pleased with fine preachers ; but look into their lives, and you see them just the same sort of people, as others are that make no pretence to devotion. The difference between them, is only the difference of natural temper. They have the same worldly cares, and fears, and joys ; they have the same turn of mind, equally vain in their desires. You see the same fondness for state and equipage, the same pride and vanity of dress, the same self-love and indulgence, the same foolish friendships and groundless hatreds, the same levity of mind and trifling spirit, the same vain ways of spending their time in visiting and conversation, as the rest of the world that make no pretence to devotion.

I do not mean this comparison betwixt people seemingly good and professed rakes ; but betwixt people of



sober lives. Let us take an instance in two modest women; let it be supposed, that one of them is careful of times of devotion, and observes them through a sense of duty, and that the other has no hearty concern about it, but is at church seldom or often, just as it happens. Now it is a very easy thing to see this difference betwixt these persons. But, when you have seen this, can you find any farther difference betwixt them? Can you find that their life is of a different kind? Are not the tempers, and customs, and manners of the one, of the same kind, as of the other? Do they live, as if they belonged to different worlds, had different views and different rules and measures of their actions? Have they not the same goods and evils, are they not pleased and displeased in the same manner, and for the same things? Do they not live in the same course of life? Does one seem to be of this world, looking at things temporal, and the other of another world, looking wholly at things eternal? Does the one live in pleasure, delighting herself in show or dress; and the other in self-denial and mortification, renouncing every thing, that looks like vanity of person, dress, or carriage? Does the one follow public diversions, and trifle away her time in idle visits and corrupt conversation; and does the other study the art of improving her time, living in prayer and watching, and such good works, as may make her time turn to advantage, and be placed to her account at the last day? Is the one careless of expense, and glad to be able to adorn herself with every costly ornament of dress? And does the other consider her fortune, as a talent, given her by God, which is to be improved religiously, and no more to be spent in vain ornaments, than it is to be buried in the earth?

Where must you look, to find one person of religion, differing, in this manner, from another, that has none? Yet, if they do not differ in the things, here related, can it with any sense be said, the one is a good Christian, and the other not?

Take an instance among the men. Leo has a great deal of good nature, has kept, what they call good com-

pany, hates every thing, false and base ; is very generous and brave to his friends, but has concerned himself so little with religion, that he hardly knows the difference betwixt a Jew and a Christian.

Eusebius, on the other hand, had early impressions of religion, and buys books of devotion. He can talk of all the feasts and fasts of the church, and knows the names of most men, that have been eminent for piety. You never hear him swear, or make a loose jest ; and, when he talks of religion, he talks of it, as of a matter of the last concern.

Here you see that one person has religion enough, to be reckoned a pious Christian, and the other is so far from all appearance of religion, that he may fairly be reckoned a Heathen ; yet, if you look into their life ; if you examine their ruling temper in the great articles of life, or the great doctrines of Christianity ; you will find the least difference imaginable.

Consider them with regard to the use of the world ; because there is what every body can see.

Now to have right notions and tempers with relation to this world is as essential to religion ; as to have right notions of God. It is as possible for a man to worship a crocodile, and yet be a pious man ; as to have his affections set upon this world, and yet be a good Christian.

But if you consider Leo and Eusebius in this respect, you will find them exactly alike ; seeking, using, and enjoying all, that can be got in this world, in the same manner and for the same ends. You will find that riches, pleasures, indulgences, state, equipage, and honor are just as much the happiness of Eusebius, as of Leo. Yet, if Christianity has not changed a man's temper with relation to these things, what can we say, it has done for him ?

For, if the doctrines of Christianity were practised ; they would make a man as different from other people, as to all worldly tempers, sensual pleasures, and the pride of life, as a wise man is different from a fool ; it would be an easy thing, to know a Christian by his outward course of life. For it is notorious, that Christians

are now, not only like other men in their frailties and infirmities, this might be in some degree excusable; but the complaint is, they are like heathens in all the main and chief articles of their lives. They enjoy the world, and live every day in the same temper, and the same designs, and the same indulgences, as they did, who knew not God, nor of any happiness in another life. Every body, that is capable of any reflection, must have observed, that this is generally the state even of devout people, whether men or women. You may see them different from other people so far, as to times and places of prayer: but, generally, like the rest of the world in all the other parts of their lives. That is, adding Christian devotion to a heathen life. I have the authority of our blessed Saviour for this remark, where he says, *Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek.* But, if to be thus affected, even with the necessary things of this life, shows that we are not yet of a Christian spirit, but like the heathens; surely to enjoy the vanity and folly of the world, as they did; to be like them in the temper of our lives, in self-love and indulgence, in sensual pleasures and diversions, in the vanity of dress, the love of show and greatness, or any other gaudy distinction of fortune, is a much greater sign of a heathen temper. Consequently they, who add devotion to such a life, must be said to pray, as Christians, but live, as heathens.

## CHAP. II.

*An inquiry into the Reason, why the generality of Christians fall so far short of the Holiness and Devotion of Christianity.*

It may now be reasonably inquired, how it comes to pass, that the lives even of the better sort of people are thus strangely contrary to the principles of Christianity.

But, before I give a direct answer to this, I desire it may be inquired, how it comes to pass, that swearing is so common a vice among Christians; (it is indeed not yet so common among women, as it is among men. But among men this sin is so common, that perhaps there are more than two in three that are guilty of it through the whole course of their lives, swearing more or less, just as it happens, some constantly, others only now and then, as it were by chance. Now I ask how comes it) that men are guilty of so gross and profane a sin, as this? There is neither ignorance, nor human infirmity, to plead for it. It is against an express commandment, and the most plain doctrine of our blessed Saviour. Do but find the reason why the generality of men live in this notorious vice; and you will have found the reason, why the generality even of the better sort of people live so contrary to Christianity. Now the reason of common swearing is this; men have not so much, as the intention to please God in all their actions. For let a man have so much piety, as to intend to please God in all the actions of his life; and he will never swear more. It will be as impossible for him to swear, while he feels this intention within himself; as it is impossible for a man, that intends to please his prince, to abuse him to his face.

It seems but a small part of piety, to have such a sincere intention, as this; and that he has no reason to look

upon himself, as a disciple of Christ, who is not thus far advanced in piety. Yet it is purely for want of this degree of piety, that you see such a mixture of sin and folly in the lives even of the better sort of people. It is for want of this intention, that you see men, that profess religion, yet live in swearing and sensuality; that you see clergymen, given to pride and covetousness, and worldly enjoyments. It is for want of this intention, that you see women, that profess devotion, yet living in all the folly and vanity of dress, wasting their time in idleness and pleasure, and in all such instances of state and equipage, as their estates will reach. For let a woman feel her heart full of this intention, and she will find it as impossible, to patch or paint, as to curse or swear; she will no more desire to shine at balls and assemblies, or make a figure among those, that are finely dressed, than she will desire to dance upon a rope, to please spectators. She will know that the one is as far from the wisdom and excellency of the Christian spirit, as the other. It was this general intention, that made the primitive Christians such eminent instances of piety; that made the goodly fellowship of the saints, and all the glorious army of martyrs and confessors. If you will here stop and ask yourself, why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians were; your own heart will tell you, that it is neither through ignorance, nor inability; but purely, because you never thoroughly intended it. You observe the same Sunday-worship, they did; and are strict in it, because it is your full intention, to be so; and, when you as fully intend to be like them in their ordinary life; when you intend to please God in all your actions; you will find it as possible, as to be strictly exact in the service of the church. When you have this intention, to please God in all your actions; you will find in you as great an aversion to every thing, that is vain and impertinent in common life, as you now have to any thing, that is profane. You will be as fearful of living in any foolish way, of spending your time or your fortune, as you are now fearful of neglecting the public worship.

Who, that wants this sincere intention, can be reckoned a Christian ? Yet, if it were among Christians, it would change the face of the world ; true piety and exemplary holiness would be as common and visible, as buying and selling, or any trade in life.

Let a clergyman be thus pious ; and he will converse, as if he had been brought up by an apostle ; he will no more talk of noble preferment, than of noble eating or a glorious chariot. He will no more complain of the frowns of the world, or a small cure, or the want of a patron, than of the want of a laced coat, or a running horse. Let him intend to please God in all his actions ; and he will know that there is nothing noble in a clergyman, but burning zeal for the salvation of souls ; nor any thing poor in his profession, but idleness and a worldly spirit.

Let a tradesman have this intention, and it will make him a saint in his shop ; his every day business will be a course of wise and reasonable actions, made holy to God, by being done in obedience to his will. He will buy and sell, labor and travel, because by so doing he can do some good to himself and others. But as nothing can please God, but what is wise, and reasonable, and holy ; so he will neither buy, nor sell, nor labor in any other manner, nor to any other end ; but such, as may be shown to be wise, and reasonable, and holy. He will therefore consider, not what arts, or methods, or application, will soonest make him richer, than his brethren, or remove him from a shop to a life of state and pleasure ; but he will consider, what methods, what application will make worldly business most acceptable to God, and a life of trade a life of holiness, devotion, and piety. This will be the temper and spirit of every tradesman ; he cannot stop short of these degrees of piety, whenever it is his intention, to please God in all his actions.

On the other hand, whoever is not of this spirit and temper in his trade and profession, and does not carry it on only so far, as is subservient to a holy and heavenly life ; it is certain, that he has not this intention ; and yet, without it, who can be shown to be a follower of Jesus Christ ?

Again, let the gentleman of birth and fortune have this intention ; and you will see, how it will carry him from every appearance of evil, to every instance of piety and goodness.

He cannot live, as humor and fancy carry him ; because he knows that nothing can please God, but a wise and regular course of life. He cannot live in idleness and indulgence, in sports and gaming, in pleasures and intemperance ; because these things cannot be made so many parts of a wise and religious life.

As he thus removes from all appearance of evil, so he aspires after every instance of goodness.—He does not ask, what is allowable and pardonable ; but what is commendable and praise-worthy. He does not ask, whether God will forgive the folly of our lives, the madness of our pleasures, the vanity of our expenses, the richness of our equipage, and the careless consumption of our time ; but whether God is pleased with these things. He does not inquire, whether it be pardonable, to hoard up money to adorn ourselves, and gild our chariots, while the widow and the orphan, the sick and the prisoner, want to be relieved ; but he asks, whether God has required these things at our hands ; whether we shall be called to account at the last day for the neglect of them ; because it is not his intent, to live in such ways, as God may perhaps pardon ; but to be diligent in such ways, as we know God will reward.

He will not therefore look at the lives of Christians, to learn, how he ought to spend his estate ; but he will look into the Scriptures, and make every doctrine, parable, precept, or instruction, that relates to rich men, a law to himself in the use of his estate.

He will have nothing to do with costly apparel ; because the rich man in the Gospel was clothed with purple and fine linen. He denies himself the pleasures and indulgences, which his estate could procure ; because our blessed Saviour saith, *Wo unto you, that are rich ; for ye have received your consolation.* He will have but one rule for charity ; and that will be, to spend all, that he can, that way ; because the judge of quick and dead hath said, that all so given, is given to him.

He will have no hospitable table for the rich, to come and feast with him ; because our blessed Lord saith, *When thou makest a dinner ; call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours ; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.*

*But, when thou makest a feast ; call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind ; and thou shalt be blessed. For they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*

He will waste no money in gilded roofs or costly furniture. He will not be carried from pleasure to pleasure in expensive state ; because an inspired apostle hath said, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Let not any one look on this, as an imaginary description of charity, that cannot be put in practice. For it is so far from being an imaginary, impracticable form of life, that it has been practised by great numbers of Christians in former ages, who were glad to turn their whole estates into a constant course of charity. It is so far from being impossible now, that, if we can find any Christians, that sincerely intend to please God in all their actions ; it will be impossible for them to do otherwise. This one principle will infallibly carry them to this height of charity, and they will find themselves unable to stop short of it.

For how is it possible for a man, that intends to please God in the use of his money, in such a state of mind, to waste his money in impertinent finery, in covering himself or his horses with gold, while there are any works of piety and charity to be done, or any way of spending it well ?

This is as strictly impossible, as for a man that intends to please God in his words, to go into company on purpose to swear and lie. For as all unreasonable expense is done with deliberation ; so no one can be guilty of it, whose constant intention is, to please God in the use of his money.

I have chosen to explain this matter by appealing to this intention ; because it makes the case plain, and be-



cause every one may see it in the clearest light, and feel it in the strongest manner, only by looking into his own heart. For it is as easy for every person to know, whether he intends to please God in all his actions, as for a servant to know, whether this be his intention toward his master. Every one also can as easily tell, how he lays out his money, and whether he considers, how to please God in it; as he can tell, where his estate is, and whether it be in money or land. So that here is no plea left for ignorance or frailty, as to this matter; every body is in the light, and every body has power. No one can fall, but he, that is not so much a Christian, as to intend to please God in the use of his estate.

You see two persons, one is regular in public and private prayer, the other is not. Now the reason of this difference is not this, that one has strength and power to observe prayer, and the other has not; but the reason is this, that one intends to please God in the duties of devotion, and the other has no intention about it. Now the case is the same in the right or wrong use of our time and money. You see one person, throwing away his time in sleep and idleness, in visiting and diversions, and his money in vain and unreasonable expenses. You see another, careful of every day, dividing his hours by rules of reason and religion, and spending all his money in works of charity; now the difference is not owing to this, that one has strength and power to do thus, and the other has not; but it is owing to this, that one intends to please God in the right use of all his time and all his money, and the other has no intention about it.

Here therefore let us judge ourselves sincerely; let us not vainly content ourselves with the common disorders of our lives, the vanity of our expenses, the folly of our diversions, the pride of our habits, the idleness of our lives, and the wasting of our time; fancying that these are such imperfections, as we fall into through the unavoidable weakness and frailty of our natures; but let us be assured, that these disorders of our common life are owing to this, that we have not so much christianity, as to intend to please God in all the actions of our life. So

that we must not look upon ourselves in a state of common and pardonable imperfection ; but in such a state, as wants the first and most fundamental principle of Christianity, viz. an intention to please God in all our actions. If any one would ask himself, how it comes to pass, that there are any degrees of sobriety, which he neglects ; any practice of humility, which he wants ; any methods of charity, which he does not follow ; any rules of redeeming time, which he does not observe ; his own heart would tell him it is because he never intended to be so exact in those duties. For, whenever we fully intend it, it is as possible, to conform to all this regularity of life, as it is possible for a man, to observe times of prayer.

So that the fault does not lie here, that we desire to be good, but through the weakness of our nature fall short of it ; but it is because we have not piety enough to intend to be as good, as we can, or to please God in all the actions of our life. This we see is plainly the case of him, that spends his time in sports, when he should be at church ; it is not his want of power, but his want of intention or desire to be there.

The case is the same in every other folly of life. She, that spends her time and money in the ways and fashions of the world, does not do so, because she wants power to be wise and religious in the management of her time and money ; but because she has no intention or desire of being so. When she feels this intention, she will find it as possible, to act up to it, as to be strictly sober and chaste ; because it is her desire to be so. •

This doctrine does not suppose that we have no need of divine grace, or that it is in our own power, to make ourselves perfect. It only supposes that, through the want of a sincere intention of pleasing God in all our actions, we fall into such irregularities of life, as by the ordinary means of grace we should have power to avoid.

[And that we have not that perfection, which our present state of grace makes us capable of, because we do not so much as intend to have it.]

It only teaches us that the reason, why you see no real mortification, no eminent charity, no profound hu-

mility, no heavenly affection, no true contempt of the world, no Christian meekness, no sincere zeal, no eminent piety in the lives of Christians, is this, because they do not so much as intend to be exact and exemplary in these virtues.

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## CHAP. III.

*Of the Danger and Folly of not intending to be as eminent and exemplary, as we can, in the practice of all Christian Virtues.*

ALTHOUGH the goodness of God and his rich mercies in Christ are a sufficient assurance, that he will be merciful to our unavoidable weaknesses and infirmities; that is, to such failings, as are the effects of ignorance or surprise; yet we have no reason to expect the same mercy toward those sins, which we have lived in, through want of intention to avoid them.

For instance, the case of a swearer, who dies in that guilt, seems to have no title to the divine mercy; for this reason, because he can no more plead any weakness or infirmity in his excuse, than the man, that hid his talent in the earth, could plead his want of strength to keep it out of the earth.

If this be right reasoning in the case of a swearer, that his sin is not to be reckoned a pardonable frailty, because he has no weakness to plead in its excuse; why then do we not carry this way of reasoning to its true extent? Why don't we as much condemn every other error of life, that has no more weakness to plead in its excuse, than common swearing.

For, if this be so bad a thing, because it might be avoided, if we did but sincerely intend it; must not then all other erroneous ways of life be very guilty, if we live in them, not through weakness and inability, but because we never sincerely intended to avoid them?

For instance, you perhaps have made no progress in the most important Christian virtues ; you have scarcely gone half way in humility and charity ; now, if your failure in these duties is purely owing to your want of intention of performing them ; have you not as little to plead for yourself, and are you not as much without all excuse, as the common swearer ?

Why therefore don't you press these things home upon your conscience ? Why do you not think it as dangerous for you to live in such defects, as are in your power to amend, as it is dangerous for a common swearer to live in the breach of that duty, which it is in his power to observe ? Is not negligence and want of a sincere intention as blameable in one case, as in another ?

You, it may be, are as far from Christian perfection, as the common swearer is from keeping the third Commandment ; are you not therefore as much condemned by the doctrines of the Gospel, as the swearer is by the third commandment ?

You perhaps will say, that all people fall short of the perfection of the Gospel, and therefore you are content with your failings. But this is saying nothing to the purpose. For the question is not, whether Gospel perfection, can be fully attained ; but, whether you come as near it, as a sincere intention, and careful diligence can carry you. Whether you are not in a much lower state, than you might be ; if you sincerely intended and carefully labored to advance yourself in all Christian virtues.

If you are as forward in the Christian life, as your best endeavors can make you ; you may justly hope that your imperfections will not be laid to your charge ; but, if your defects in piety, humility, and charity, are owing to your negligence and want of sincere intention to be as eminent, as you can, in these virtues ; then you leave yourself as much without excuse, as he, that lives in the sin of swearing, through want of a sincere intention to depart from it.

The salvation of our souls is set forth in Scripture, as a thing of difficulty, that requires all our diligence ; that is to be *worked out with fear and trembling*.

We are told, that *strait is the gate and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be, that find it. That many are called, but few are chosen ; that many will miss of salvation, who seem to have taken some pains, to obtain it.. Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

Here our blessed Lord commands us to strive to enter in ; because many will fail, who only *seek* to enter. By which we are plainly taught, that religion is a state of labor and striving, and that many will fail of salvation ; not, because they took no care or pains about it ; but, because they did not take pains and care enough ; they only sought, but did not *strive* to enter in.

Every Christian therefore should as well examine his life by these doctrines, as by the commandments. For these doctrines are as plain marks of our condition, as the commandments are of our duty.

For, if salvation is only given to those, who strive for it ; it is as reasonable for me to consider, whether my course of life be a course of striving to obtain it ; as to consider, whether I keep any of the commandments.

If my religion is only a formal compliance with those modes of worship, that are in fashion ; if it costs me no pains or trouble ; if it lays me under no restraints ; if I have no sober reflections about it ; is it not great weakness, to think that I am *striving to enter in at the strait gate ?*

If I am seeking every thing, that can delight my senses and regale my appetites ; spending my time and fortune in pleasures, diversions, and worldly enjoyments ; a stranger to watchings, prayers, and mortifications ; how can it be said, that I am *working out my salvation with fear and trembling ?*

If there is nothing in my life and conversation, that shows me to be different from the Jews and Heathens ; if I use the world, as the generality of people do ; why should I think that I am among those few, who are in the narrow way to heaven ?

Yet, if the way is narrow ; if none can walk in it, but

those that strive ; is it not as necessary for me to consider, whether the labor, I take, be a sufficient striving ; as to consider whether I sufficiently observe the second or third commandment ?

The sum of the matter is this. From the above-mentioned passages of Scripture, it seems plain, that our salvation depends upon the sincerity and perfection of our endeavours to obtain it.

Weak and imperfect men, notwithstanding their frailties and defects, will be received, as having pleased God ; if they have done their utmost to please him.

The rewards of charity, piety, and humility, will be given to those, whose lives have been a careful labor to exercise these virtues in as a high a degree, as they could.

We cannot offer to God the service of angels ; we cannot obey him, as man in a state of perfection could ; but fallen men can do their best, and this is the perfection, that is required of us ; it is only the perfection of our best endeavors, a careful labor to be as perfect, as we can.

But, if we stop short of this, for aught we know, we stop short of the mercy of God, and leave ourselves nothing to plead from the terms of the Gospel. For God has there made no promises of mercy to the slothful and negligent. His mercy is only offered to our frail and imperfect, but best endeavours to practise all manner of righteousness.

As the law to angels is angelical righteousness ; as the law to perfect beings is strict perfection ; so the law to our imperfect nature is the best obedience, that our frail nature is able to perform.

The measure of our love to God seems in justice to be the measure of our love of every virtue. We are to love and practise it with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. When we cease to live with this regard to virtue ; we live below our nature ; and, instead of being able to plead our infirmities, we stand chargeable with negligence.

It is for this reason, that we are exhorted to work out our salvation with fear and trembling ; because, unless our heart and passions are eagerly bent upon the work of salvation ; unless holy fears animate our endeavours, and keep our consciences strict and tender about every part of our duty, constantly examining, how we live, and how fit we are to die ; we shall in all probability fall into a state of negligence, and sit down in such a course of life, as will never carry us to the rewards of heaven.

He, who considers that a just God can make such allowances only, as are suitable to his justice, that our works are all to be examined by fire ; will find that fear and trembling are proper for those, that are drawing near so great a trial.

Indeed there is no probability, that any one will do all the duty, that is expected from him, or make that progress in piety, which the holiness and justice of God requires of him ; but he, that is constantly afraid of falling short of it.

Now this is not intended, to possess people's minds with a scrupulous anxiety, and discontent in the service of God ; but to fill them with a just fear of living in sloth and idleness, and in the neglect of such virtues, as they will want at the day of judgment. It is to excite them to an earnest examination of their lives, to such zeal, and care, and concern after Christian perfection, as they use in any matter, that has gained their affections. It is only desiring them to be so apprehensive of their state, so humble in the opinion of themselves, so earnest after higher degrees of piety, and so fearful of falling short of happiness, as the great apostle was, when he thus wrote to the Philippians.

“ Not, as though I had already attained, either were already perfect : but this one thing I do, forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things, which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Then he adds, "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded."

But, if the apostle thought it necessary for those who were in his state of perfection, to be thus minded; that is, thus laboring, pressing, and aspiring after some degrees of holiness, at which they were not then arrived; surely it is much more necessary for us, who are laboring under great imperfections, to be thus minded; that is, thus striving after such degress of a holy and divine life, as we have not yet attained.

The best way for any one to know, how much he ought to aspire after holiness, is, to consider, not how much will make his present life easy; but to ask himself, how much he thinks will make him easy at the hour of death.

Now any man, that dares to be so serious, as to put this question to himself, will be forced to answer, that at death every one will wish that he had been as perfect, as human nature can be.

Is not this therefore sufficient to put us, not only upon wishing, but laboring after that perfection, which we shall then lament the want of? Is it not excessive folly, to be content with such a course of piety, when we shall so want it, as to have nothing else to comfort us? How can we carry a severer condemnation against ourselves, than to believe that at the hour of death we shall want the virtues of the saints; and wish that we had been among the first servants of God; and yet take no methods of arriving at their height of piety, while we live?

Though this is an absurdity, that we can easily pass over at present, while the health of our bodies, the passions of our minds, the noise and hurry, and pleasures, and business of the world, lead us on with eyes, that see not, and ears, that hear not; yet at death, it will set itself before us in a dreadful magnitude, it will haunt us, like a dismal ghost, and our conscience will never let us take our eyes from it.

We see in worldly matters, what a torment self-condemnation is; and how hardly a man is able to forgive



himself, when he has brought himself into any calamity or disgrace, by his own folly. The affliction is made doubly tormenting, because he is forced to charge it all upon himself, as his own act and deed, against the nature and reason of things, and contrary to the advice of friends.

Now by this we may in some degree guess, how terrible the pain of that self-condemnation will be, when a man shall find himself in the miseries of death, under the severity of a self-condemning conscience ; charging all his distress upon his own folly and madness, against the sense and reason of his own mind, against the doctrines and precepts of religion, and contrary to the instructions, calls, and warnings of God and man.

*Penitens* was a busy tradesman, and very prosperous in his dealings ; but died in the thirty-fifth year of his age. A little before his death, when the doctors had given him over, some of his neighbours came one evening to see him ; at which time, he spake thus to them : " I see, my friends, the tender concern, you have for me, by the grief in your countenances, and I know the thoughts, you now have about me. You think, how melancholy a case it is, to see so young a man, and in flourishing business, delivered up to death. Perhaps, had I visited any of you in my condition, I should have had the same thoughts of you. But now, my friends, my thoughts are no more like your thoughts, than my condition is like yours. It is no trouble to me now to think that I am to die young, or before I have raised an estate. These things are now sunk into such *nothings*, that I have no name, little enough, to call them by. For, if in a few days, I am to leave this carcass, to be buried in the earth, and to find myself, either forever happy in the favor of God, or eternally separated from all light and peace ; can any words sufficiently express the littleness of every thing else ? Is there any dream, like the dream of life, which amuses us with disregard of these things ? Is there any folly, like the folly of our manly

state, which is too busy, to be at leisure for these reflections ?

When we consider death, as a misery, we only think of it as a miserable separation from the enjoyments of this life. We seldom mourn over an old man, that dies rich ; but we lament the young, that are taken away in the progress of their fortune. You yourselves look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepared to meet the Judge of quick and dead ; but that I am to leave a prosperous trade in the flower of my life. This is the wisdom of our manly thoughts ; and yet what folly of the silliest children is so great, as this ? For what is there dreadful in death, but the consequences of it ? When a man is dead, what does any thing signify to him, but the state, he is then in ?

Our poor friend *Lepidus* died, you know, as he was dressing himself for a feast ; do you think it is now part of his trouble, that he did not live till that entertainment was over ? Feasts, and business, and pleasures, and enjoyments, seem great things to us, while we think of nothing else ; but, as soon, as we add death to them, they all sink into equal littleness ; and the soul, that is separated from the body, no more laments the loss of business, than the losing of a feast.

If I am going into the joys of God ; could there be any reason to grieve, that this happened to me before I was forty years of age ? Could it be a sad thing, to go to heaven, before I had made a few more bargains, or stood a little longer behind a counter ?

If I am to go among lost spirits ; could there be any reason to be content, that this did not happen to me, till I was old and full of riches ?

If good angels were ready to receive my soul, could it be any grief to me, that I was dying upon a poor bed in a garret ?

If God has delivered me up to evil spirits, to be dragged by them to places of torment, could it be any comfort to me, that they found me upon a bed of state ?

When you are as near death, as I am, you will know that the different states of life, whether of youth or age,

riches or poverty, greatness or meanness, signify no more to you, than whether you die in a poor or stately apartment. The greatness of those things, which follow death, makes all that goes before it sink into nothing.

Now, that judgment is the next thing, I look for, and everlasting happiness or misery is come so near me ; all the enjoyments and prosperities of life seem as insignificant, and have no more to do with my happiness, than the clothes, I wore, before I could speak.

But, my friends, how am I surprised, that I have not always had these thoughts ? For what is there in the terrors of death, in the vanities of life, or the necessities of piety, but what I might have as easily and fully seen in any part of my life ? What a strange thing is it, that a little health, or the business of a shop, keeps us so senseless of these great things, that are coming so fast upon us !

Just as you came into my chamber, I was thinking with myself, what numbers of souls are now in the world, in my condition at this very time, surprised with a summons to the other world ; some taken from their shops and farms, others from their sports and pleasures, these at suits at law, those at gaming tables, some on the road, others at their own fire-sides, and all seized at an hour, when they thought nothing of it ; frightened at the approach of death, confounded at the vanity of all their labors, and projects ; astonished at the folly of their past lives, and not knowing, which way to turn their thoughts, to find any comfort. Their consciences flying in their faces, bringing all their sins to their remembrance, tormenting them with deepest convictions of their own folly, presenting them the sight of the angry Judge ; the worm, that never dies ; the fire, that is never quenched ; the gates of hell, the powers of darkness, and the bitter pains of eternal death.

Oh, my friends ! bless God, that you are not of this number ; that you have time and strength, to employ yourselves in such works of piety, as may bring you peace at the last. Take this along with you, that there

is nothing, but a life of great piety, or a death of great stupidity, that can keep off these apprehensions.

Had I now a thousand worlds, I would give them all for one year more, that I might present unto God one year of such devotion and good works, as I never before so much, as intended.

You perhaps, when you consider, that I have lived free from scandal and debauchery, and in the communion of the church ; wonder to see me so full of remorse and self condemnation at the approach of death. But, alas ! what a poor thing it is to have lived only free from murder, theft, and adultery, which is all that I can say of myself.

You know indeed, that I have never been reckoned a sot, but you are at the same time witnesses, and have been frequent companions of my intemperance, sensuality, and indulgence.

If I am now going to a judgment, where nothing will be rewarded, but good works, I may well be concerned, that, though I am no sot, yet I have no Christian sobriety to plead for me.

It is true, I have lived in the communion of the church, and generally frequented its worship and service on Sundays ; when I was neither too idle, or not otherwise disposed of by my business and pleasures. But then, my conformity to the public worship has been rather a thing of course, than any real intention of doing that, which the service of the church supposes ; had it not been so, I had been oftener at church, more devout, when there, and more fearful of ever neglecting it.

But the thing, that now surprises me above all wonders, is this, that I never had so much, as a general intention of living up to the piety of the gospel. This never so much as entered into my head or my heart. I never once in my life considered, whether I was living, as the laws of religion direct, or whether my way of life was such, as would procure me the mercy of God at this hour.

Can it be thought, that I have kept the gospel terms of salvation, without ever so much, as intending in any

serious and deliberate manner, either to know them or keep them? Can it be thought, that I have pleased God with such a life, as he requires, though I have lived without ever considering, what he requires, or how much I have performed? How easy a thing would salvation be, if it could fall into my careless hands, who have never had so many serious thoughts about it, as about any one common bargain, that I have made?

In the business of life I have used prudence and reflection; I have done every thing by rule and method. I have been glad, to converse with men of experience and judgment; to find out the reasons, why some fail and other succeed in any business. I have taken no step in trade, but with great care and caution, considering every advantage or danger, that attended it. I have always had my eye upon the main end of business; and have studied all the ways and means of being a gainer by all, that I undertook.

But what is the reason, that I have brought none of this temper to religion? What is the reason, that I, who have so often talked of the necessity of rule and method, and diligence in worldly business, have all this while never once thought of any rule, or method, or management, to carry me on in a life of piety?

Do you think any thing can astonish and confound a dying man, like this? What pain do you think a man must feel, when his conscience lays all this folly to his charge; when it shall show him, how regular, exact, and wise he has been in small matters; and how stupid he has lived, without reflection, without rule, in things of eternal moment.

Had I only my frailties and imperfections to lament at this time; I should lie here, humbly trusting in the mercy of God. But, alas! how can I call a general disregard, and a thorough neglect of all religious improvement, a frailty and imperfection; when it was as much in my power to have been exact, and careful, and diligent in a course of piety, as in the business of my trade.

I could have called in as many helps, have practised as many rules, and been taught as many certain meth-

ods of holy living ; as of thriving in my shop ; had I but so intended and desired it.

Oh ! my friends ! a careless life, inattentive to the duties of religion, is so without excuse ; so unworthy of the mercy of God ; such a shame to the reason of our minds ; that I can hardly conceive a greater punishment, than for a man to be thrown into the state, that I am in, to reflect upon it."

*Penitens* was here going on ; but had his mouth stopped by a convulsion, which never suffered him to speak more. He lay convulsed about twelve hours, and then gave up the ghost.

Now if every reader would imagine this *Penitens* to have been some particular acquaintance or relation of his ; and fancy that he saw and heard all, that is here described ; that he stood by his bed-side, when his poor friend lay in such agony, lamenting the folly of his past life ; it would in all probability teach him, such wisdom as never entered into his heart before. If to this, he should consider, how often he himself might have been surprised in the same state of negligence, and made an example to the rest of the world ; this double reflection, both upon the distress of his friend, and the goodness of that God, who had preserved him from it, would in all likelihood soften his heart, and make him turn the remainder of his life into a regular course of piety.

This therefore being so useful a meditation, I shall here leave the reader, as I hope, seriously engaged in it.

## CHAP. IV.

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*We can please God in no state or employment of Life, but by intending and devoting it all to his Glory.*

HAVING stated the general nature of devotion, and shown, that it implies, not any form of prayer, but a certain form of life, that is offered to God, not at any particular time or place, but every where and in every thing ; I shall now descend to some particulars, and, show, how we are to devote our labor and employment, our time and fortune unto God.

As a good Christian should consider every place, as holy, because God is there ; so he should look upon every part of his life, as a matter of holiness, because it is to be offered unto God.

The profession of a clergyman is a holy profession, because it is a ministration in holy things. But worldly business is to be made holy unto the Lord, by being done, as a service to him, and in conformity to his divine will. For, as all men and all things in the world as truly belong unto God, as any places, things, or persons, that are devoted to divine service ; so all things are to be used, and all persons are to act in their several states and employments for the glory of God.

Men of worldly business therefore must not look upon themselves, as at liberty to live to themselves, to sacrifice to their own humor, because their employment is of a worldly nature. But they must consider, that, as the world and all worldly professions, as truly belong to God, as persons and things, that are devoted to the altar ; so it is as much the duty of men in worldly business, to live wholly unto God, as it is the duty of those, who are devoted to divine service.

As the whole world is God's, so the whole world is to act for God. As all men have the same relation to God; as all men have their powers and faculties from God; so all men are obliged to act for God with all their powers and faculties.

As all things are God's, so all things are to be used and regarded, as the things of God. For men to abuse things on earth, and live to themselves, is the same rebellion against God, as for angels to abuse things in heaven; because God is just the same Lord of all on earth, as he is the Lord of all in heaven.

Things may differ in their use, but yet they are all to be used according to the will of God.

Men may differ in their employment; but they must all act for the same end, as dutiful servants of God, in pious performance of their several callings.

Clergymen must live wholly unto God in one particular way, that is, in the exercise of holy offices, in the ministration of prayers and sacraments, and a zealous distribution of spiritual goods. But men of other employments are in their particular ways as much obliged to act, as servants of God, and live wholly unto him in their several callings. This is the only difference between Clergymen, and people of other callings.

When it can be shown, that men might be vain, covetous, sensual, or proud in the exercise of their worldly business, then it will be allowable for clergymen, to indulge the same temper in their sacred profession. For, though these tempers are most odious and criminal in clergymen, who beside their baptismal vow, have a second time devoted themselves to God, to be his servants, not in the common offices of human life, but in the spiritual service of the most sacred things, and are therefore to keep themselves as separate and different from the common life of other men, as a church or an altar is to be kept separate from houses and tables of common use—Yet as all christians are by baptism devoted to God, and made professors of holiness; so are they in their several callings to live as holy and heavenly persons; doing every thing in their common life only in such



manner, that it may be received by God, as a service done to him. For things spiritual and temporal, sacred, and common, must, like men and angels, like heaven and earth, all conspire in the glory of God.

As there is but one God and Father of all, whose glory gives light and life to every thing that lives; whose presence fills all places, whose power supports all beings, whose providence ruleth all events; so every thing that lives, in heaven or earth, whether they be thrones or principalities, men or angels, must all with one spirit live wholly to the praise and glory of this one God and Father of all. Angels, as angels, in their heavenly ministrations; but men, as men; women, as women; priests, as priests; and deacons, as deacons; some with things spiritual, and some with things temporal, offering to God the daily sacrifice of a reasonable life, wise actions, purity of heart, and heavenly affections.

This is the common business of all persons in this world. It is not left to any women to trifle away their time in the follies and impertinences of fashionable life; nor to any men, to resign themselves up to worldly cares and concerns; it is not left to the rich to gratify their passions in the indulgences of life; nor to the poor to torment their hearts with the poverty of their state; but men and women, rich and poor, must with bishops and priests, walk before God in the same wise and holy spirit, in the same denial of all vain tempers, and in the same discipline and care of their souls; not only, because they have all the same rational nature, and are servants of the same God; but because they all want the same holiness, to make them fit for the same happiness, to which they are called. It is therefore absolutely necessary for all Christians, to consider themselves, as persons, devoted to holiness; and so order their common ways of life by such rules of reason and piety, as may turn into continual service to Almighty God.

Now, to make our labor or employment an acceptable service unto God, we must carry it on with the same temper, that is required in giving alms, or any work of piety. For, if *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we*

*do, we must do all to the glory of God ; If we are to use this world, as if we used it not ; if we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God ; if we are to live by faith, and not by sight, and to have our conversation in heaven ; then it is necessary, that the common way of our life, in every state, be made to glorify God by such tempers, as make our prayers acceptable to him. For, if we are worldly minded in our employments ; if they are carried on with vain desires, and covetous temper, only to satisfy ourselves ; we can no more be said to live to the glory of God, than gluttons and drunkards can be said to eat and drink to the glory of God.*

As the glory of God is one and the same thing, so whatever we do suitable to it, must be done with one and the same spirit. That same state and temper of mind, which makes our alms and devotions acceptable, must also make our labor, a proper offering unto God. If a man labor to be rich, and pursue his business, that he may raise himself to a state of glory in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment ; he is acting under other masters, and has no more title to a reward from God, than he, that gives alms, that he may be seen ; or prays, that he may be heard of men. For vain desires are no more allowable in our employments, than in our alms and devotions. For these tempers of worldly pride and vain glory, are not only evil, when they mix with our good works ; but they have the same evil nature, and make us odious to God, when they enter into the common business of life. If it were allowable to indulge covetous or vain passions in our worldly employments ; it would then be allowable to be vain glorious in our devotions. But, as our alms and devotions are not an acceptable service, but when they proceed from a heart, truly devoted to God ; so our common employment cannot be reckoned a service to him, but when it is performed with the same temper and piety of heart.

Most of the employments of life are in their nature lawful ; and may be made a substantial part of our duty to God ; if we engage in them only so far, and for such ends, as are suitable to beings, that are to live above the

world, while they live in it. This is the only measure of our application to any worldly business ; let it be what it will, it must have no more of our hands, our hearts, or our time, than is consistent with a daily, careful preparation of ourselves for another life. For, as all Christians, as such have renounced this world, to prepare themselves by daily devotion and universal holiness, for an eternal state of another nature ; they must look upon worldly employments, as upon worldly wants and bodily infirmities ; things not to be desired, but only to be endured and suffered, till death and the resurrection have carried us to an eternal state of real happiness.

Now he that does not look at the things of this life in this degree of littleness, cannot be said either to feel or believe the great truths of Christianity. For, if he think any thing important in human business, can he be said, to feel or believe those Scriptures, which represent this life, and the greatest things of life, as bubbles, dreams, and shadows ?

If he think worldly glory, to be a proper happiness of a Christian ; how can he be said to feel or believe this doctrine ? *Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name, as evil, for the son of man's sake.* For surely, if there were any real happiness in worldly glory ; if these things deserved our care, it could not be matter of the highest joy, when we are torn from them by persecutions and sufferings. If, therefore, a man will so live, as to show, that he believes the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, he must live above the world ; this is the temper, that must enable him to do the business of life, and yet live wholly unto God, and to go through some worldly employment with a heavenly mind. It is as necessary, that people live with this temper, as it is, that their employment itself be lawful.

The husbandman, is employed in an honest business, that is necessary in life, and very capable of being made an acceptable service unto God. But, if he labor not

to serve any reasonable end of life, but in order to have his plough made of silver, and to have his horses harnessed in gold ; the honesty of his employment is lost to him, and his labor becomes his folly.

A tradesman may justly think it agreeable to the will of God, for him to sell such things, as are innocent and useful in life ; such as help both himself and others to a reasonable support. But, if he trade only with regard to himself ; if it be his chief end to grow rich, that he may live in figure and indulgences ; his trade loses its innocency, and is so far from being an acceptable service to God, that it is only a more plausible course of covetousness, self love, and ambition. For such a one turns the necessities of employments into pride and covetousness, as the sot and epicure turn the necessities of eating and drinking into gluttony and drunkenness. Now he, who labors for these ends, that he may be rich, and live in pleasure and indulgence, lives no more to the glory of God, than he, that games for the same ends. For, though there is a great difference between trading and gaming ; yet most of that difference is lost, when men trade with the same desires, and for the same ends, that others game. Charity and fine dress are things very different ; but, if men give alms for the same reasons, that others dress fine, only to be seen and admired ; charity is then like the vanity of fine clothes. In like manner, if the same motives make some people industrious in their trades, which make others constant at gaming ; such pains are like the pains of gaming.

Calidus has traded above thirty years in the greatest city in the kingdom ; he has been so many years constantly increasing his trade and fortune. Every hour of the day is with him an hour of business ; and, though he eats and drinks heartily, yet every meal seems to be in a hurry, and he would say grace if he had time. Calidus ends every day at the tavern, but has not leisure to be there till near nine o'clock. He is always forced to drink a hearty glass, to drive thoughts of business out of his head, and make his spirits drowsy enough for sleep. He does business all the time, that he is rising,

and has settled several matters before he can get to his counting room. His prayers are a short ejaculation or two, which he never misses in stormy, tempestuous weather, because he has always something or other at sea. Calidus will tell you with great pleasure, that he has been in this hurry for so many years, and that it must have killed him long ago, but that it has been a rule with him, to get out of town every Saturday, and make the Sunday a day of quiet and good refreshment in the country.

He is now so rich, that he would leave off business, and amuse his old age with building and furnishing a fine house in the country; but he is afraid he should grow melancholy, if he were to quit business. He will tell you with great gravity, that it is a dangerous thing, for a man, that has been used to get money, ever to leave it off. If thoughts of religion happen at any time to steal into his head; Calidus contents himself with thinking that he never was a friend to heretics and infidels; that he has always been civil to the minister of his parish, and very often given something to charity schools.

Now this way of life is at such a distance from the doctrine and discipline of Christianity, that no one can live in it through ignorance or frailty. Calidus can no more imagine, that *he is born again of the spirit*; that he is *in Christ a new creature*; that he lives *here, as a stranger and pilgrim, setting his affections on things above, and laying up treasures in heaven*. He can no more imagine this, than he can think that he has been all his life an apostle, working miracles and preaching the gospel.

It must also be owned, that the generality of trading people, are too much like Calidus. You see them all the week buried in business, unable to think of any thing else; and then spending the Sunday in idleness and refreshment, in wandering into the country, in such visits and jovial meetings, as make it often the worst day of the week.

Now they do not live thus, because they cannot support themselves with less care and application to business; but they live thus, because they want to grow

rich, and to maintain their families in such figure and finery, as a christian life has no occasion for. Take away this temper, and then people of all trades will find themselves at leisure to live every day like Christians, to be careful of every duty of the Gospel, to live in a visible course of religion, and be every day strict observers both of private and public prayer.

Now the only way to do this, is for people to consider their trade, as something, they are obliged to devote to the glory of God ; something, they are to do in such manner, that they may make it a duty to him. Nothing can be right in business, that is not under these rules. The apostle commands servants, *to be obedient to their masters in singleness of heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers ; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men.*

This passage sufficiently shows that all Christians are to live wholly unto God in every condition ; doing the work of their common calling in such manner, and for such ends, as to make it a part of their devotion or service to God. For certainly, if poor slaves are not to comply with their business, as men-pleasers ; if they are to look wholly unto God in all their actions, and serve in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord ; surely men of other conditions must be as much obliged to go through their business with the same singleness of heart ; not as pleasing the vanity of their own minds ; not as gratifying their own selfish, worldly passions ; but as servants of God in all, they have to do. For surely no one will say that a slave is to devote his life to God, and make the will of God the sole rule and end of his service ; but that a tradesman need not act with the same spirit of devotion. For this is as absurd, as to make it necessary for one man to be more just or faithful, than another.

It is therefore absolutely certain, that no Christian is to enter any farther into business ; nor for any other ends, than such, as he can in singleness of heart offer unto God, as a reasonable service. For the Son of God has redeemed us for this only end, that we should by a life

of reason and piety live to the glory of God; this is the only rule and measure for every order and state of life. Without this rule, the most lawful employment becomes a sinful state of life.

Take away this from the life of a clergyman; and his holy profession serves only to expose him to a greater damnation. Take away this from tradesmen; and shops are but so many houses of filthy lucre.—Take away this from gentlemen; and the course of their life becomes a course of sensuality, pride, and wantonness. Take away this rule from our tables; and all falls into gluttony and drunkenness. Take away this measure from our dress and habits; and all is turned into such paint, and glitter, as are a real shame to the wearer. Take away this from the use of our fortunes; and you will find people sparing in nothing, but charity. Take away this from our diversions; and you will find no sports too silly, nor any entertainments too vain and corrupt, to be the pleasure of Christians.

If, therefore, we desire to live unto God, it is necessary to bring our whole life under this law, to make his glory the sole rule and measure of our acting in every employment of life. For there is no other true devotion, but this of living devoted to God in the common business of our lives.

So that men must not content themselves with the lawfulness of their employments; but must consider, whether they use them, as they are to use every thing, as strangers and pilgrims, that are baptized into the resurrection of Jesus Christ; that are to follow him in a wise and heavenly course of life, in the mortification of all worldly desires, and in purifying and preparing their souls for the enjoyment of God.

For to be vain, or proud, or covetous, or ambitious in the common course of our business, is as contrary to the temper of Christianity, as cheating and dishonesty.

If a glutton were to say in excuse of his gluttony, that he only eats such things, as it is lawful to eat; he would make as good an excuse for himself, as the greedy, covetous, ambitious tradesman, that should say, he only deals

in lawful business. For, as a Christian is not only required to be honest, but to be of a christian spirit, and make his life an exercise of humility, repentance, and heavenly affection ; so all tempers, that are contrary to these, are as contrary to Christianity, as cheating is contrary to honesty.

So that the matter plainly comes to this ; all irregular tempers in trade and business are like irregular tempers in eating and drinking.

Proud views and vain desires in our worldly employments, are as truly vices, as hypocrisy in prayer, or vanity in alms. No reason can be given, why vanity in our alms should make us odious to God, but what will prove any other kind of pride equally odious. He, that labors in a calling, that he may make a figure in the world, and draw the eyes of people upon the splendor of his condition, is as far from the humility of a Christian, as he, that gives alms, that he may be seen of men.

For the reason, why pride, and vanity in our prayers and alms render them an unacceptable service to God, is not, because there is any thing particular in prayers and alms, that cannot allow of pride ; but because pride is in no respect made for man ; it destroys the piety of our prayers and alms, because it destroys the piety of every thing, that it touches ; and renders every action incapable of being offered to God.

So that, if we could so divide ourselves, as to be humble in some respects, and proud in others ; such humility would be of no service to us ; because God requires us as truly to be humble in all our actions, as to be honest in all our actions.

As a man is not honest, because he is not to many people, or upon several occasions ; but because honesty is the measure of all his dealings with every body ; so the case is the same in humility, it must be the ruling habit of our minds, and extend itself to all our actions, before it can be imputed to us.

We indeed sometimes talk, as if a man might be humble in some things and proud in others ; humble in his dress, but proud of his learning. But, though this may



pass in common discourse, where few things are said according to strict truth ; it cannot be allowed, when we examine into the nature of our actions.

It is very possible for a man, that lives by cheating, to be very punctual in paying for what he buys ; but every one is assured, that he does not do so out of any principle of true honesty.

In like manner it is very possible for a man, that is proud of his estate, ambitious in his views, or vain of his learning, to disregard his dress and person, in such a manner, as a truly humble man would do ; but to suppose that he does so out of a true principle of religious humility is as absurd, as to suppose that a cheat pays for what he buys, out of a principle of religious honesty.

As, therefore, all kinds of dishonesty destroy our pretence to an honest principle of mind ; so all kinds of pride destroy our pretence to an humble spirit.

No one wonders, that those prayers and alms, which proceed from ostentation are odious to God ; but yet it is as easy to show that pride is as pardonable there, as any where else.

If we could suppose that God rejects pride in our prayers and alms, but bears with it in our dress, our persons, or estates ; it would be the same thing, as to suppose that God condemns falsehood in some actions, but allows it in others. For pride in one thing differs from pride in another thing, as the robbing of one man differs from the robbing of another.

If ostentation is so odious, that it destroys the worth of the most reasonable actions ; surely it must be equally odious in those actions, which are founded in the weakness and infirmity of our nature. As thus, alms are commanded by God, as excellent in themselves, as true instances of a divine temper, but clothes are only allowed to cover our shame ; surely therefore it must at least be as odious a degree of pride, to be vain in our clothes, as to be vain in our alms.

Again, we are commanded to pray without ceasing, as a mean of rendering our souls more exalted and divine, but we are forbidden to lay up treasures upon earth ;

and can we think that it is not as bad to be vain of those treasures, which we are forbidden to lay up, as to be vain of those prayers, which we are commanded to make?

Women are required to have their heads covered, and to adorn themselves with shamefacedness; if, therefore, they are vain in those things, which are expressly forbidden; if they patch and paint that part, which can only be adorned by shamefacedness; surely they have as much to repent of for such a pride, as they have, whose pride is the motive to their prayers and charity. This must be granted, unless it is more pardonable, to glory in our shame, than in our virtue.

All these instances are only to show us the necessity of such a uniform piety, as extends itself to all the actions of life.

That we must eat and drink, and dress and discourse, according to the sobriety of the Christian spirit; engage in no employments, but such, as we can truly devote to God; nor pursue them any farther, than conduces to the reasonable ends of a devout life.

That we must be honest, not only on particular occasions, and in such instances, as are applauded in the world; but from such a living principle of justice, as makes us love integrity in all instances, follow it through all dangers, and against all opposition; knowing that, the more we pay for truth, the better is our bargain, and that then our integrity becomes a pearl, when we have parted with all to keep it.

That we must be humble, not only in such instances, as are expected in the world; but in such a humility of spirit, as renders us meek and lowly in the whole course of our lives; as shows itself in our dress, persons, conversation, enjoyment of the world, tranquillity of mind, patience under injuries, submission to superiors, and condescension to those below us, and in all the outward actions of our lives.

That we must devote, not only times and places to prayer; but be everywhere in the spirit of devotion, with hearts always set toward heaven; looking up to God in all our actions, and doing every thing, as hisser-

vants ; living in the world, as in a holy temple of God, and always worshipping him, though not with our lips, yet with the thankfulness of our hearts, the holiness of our actions, and a charitable use of all his gifts. That we must not only send up petitions and thoughts now and then to heaven ; but must go through our worldly business with a heavenly spirit, as members of Christ's mystical body ; that with new hearts, and new minds, we are to turn an earthly life into a preparation for a life of greatness and glory in the kingdom of heaven.

Now the only way to arrive at this piety of spirit is to bring all your actions to the same rule, as your devotions and alms. You well know, what makes the piety of your alms or devotions ; now the same rules, the same regard to God, must render every thing else, you do, an acceptable service to God.

Enough, I hope, has been said, to show the necessity of thus introducing religion into all the actions of your common life, and of acting with the same regard to God in all, that you do, as in your prayers and alms.

Eating is one of the lowest actions of our lives ; it is common to us with mere animals ; yet we see that the piety of all ages has turned this ordinary action of animal life, into piety to God, by making every meal begin and end with devotion.

We see yet some remains of this custom in most Christian families ; some such little formality, as shows that people used to call upon God at the beginning and end of their meals. But indeed it is now generally so performed, as to look more like a mockery of devotion, than any solemn application of the mind to God. In one house you may perhaps see the head of the family just pulling off his hat, in another half getting up from his seat ; another may proceed so far, as to make, as if he said something ; but however, these little attempts are the remains of some devotion, that was formerly used at such times ; and are proofs, that religion has belonged to this part of common life.

But to such a pass are we now come, that, though the

custom is yet preserved ; yet we can hardly bear with him, that seems to perform it with any degree of seriousness ; and look upon it, as a sign of a fanatical temper, if a man has not done it as soon, as he begins.

I would not be thought to plead for the necessity of long prayers at these times ; but thus much I think may be said, that, if prayer is proper at these times ; we ought to oblige ourselves to use such a form of words, as should show that we solemnly appeal to God for such graces and blessings, as are proper to the occasion. Otherwise, the mock ceremony, instead of blessing our victuals, does but accustom us to trifle with devotion, and give us a habit of being unaffected with our prayers.

If every head of a family, at the return of every meal, were to oblige himself to make a solemn adoration of God in such a decent manner, as becomes a devout mind, it would be very likely to teach him that swearing, sensuality, gluttony, and loose discourse, were very improper at those meals, which were to begin and end with devotion.

If in these days of general corruption, this part of devotion is fallen into a mock ceremony ; it must be imputed to this cause, that sensuality and intemperance have too great a power over us, to suffer us to add any devotion to our meals. But thus much must be said, that, when we are as pious, as Jews and Heathens of all ages have been ; we shall think it proper to pray at the beginning and end of our meals.

I have appealed to the pious custom of all ages of the world, as a proof of the reasonableness of the doctrine of this and the foregoing chapters ; that is, as a proof, that religion is to be the measure of all the actions of ordinary life. For surely, if we are not to eat, but under such rules of devotion ; it must plainly appear, that, whatever else we do, must in its proper way, be done with the same regard to the glory of God, and agreeably to the principles of a devout and pious mind.

## CHAP. V.

*Persons, that are free from the necessity of labor are to consider themselves, as devoted to God in a higher degree.*

A GREAT part of the world are free from the necessities of labor, and have their time at their own disposal.

But, as no one is to live according to his own humor, or fancy, but in such manner, as to please God; so those, who have no particular employment, are so far from being left at greater liberty to live to themselves, and spend their time and fortune, as they please, that they are under greater obligations of living wholly to God in all their actions. The freedom of their state lays them under a greater necessity of choosing and doing the best things. They are those of whom much will be required, because much is given unto them.

A slave can live unto God in one particular way; that is, by religious patience and submission in his state of slavery.

But all ways of holy living, and all kinds of virtue, lie open to those, who are masters of themselves, their time, and their fortune.

It is as much the duty therefore of such persons, to make a wise use of their liberty; to devote themselves to all kinds of virtue; to aspire after every thing, that is holy, and pious; to endeavour to be eminent in all good works, and to please God in the most perfect manner; as it is the duty of a slave, to be resigned to God in his state of slavery.

You are no laborer or tradesman, you are neither merchant, nor soldier; consider yourself therefore, as placed in a state in some degree like that of good angels, who are sent into the world, as ministering spirits, for the general good of mankind; to assist, protect, and minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation. For the more

you are free from the common necessities of men ; the more you are to imitate the higher perfections of angels.

Had you, Serena, been obliged by the necessities of life, to wash clothes for your maintenance, or to wait upon some mistress, that demanded all your labor ; it would then be your duty, to serve and glorify God, by such humility, obedience, and faithfulness, as might adorn that state of life.

It would then be recommended to your care, to improve that one talent to its greatest height ; that, when the time came, that mankind were to be rewarded for their labors by the great Judge of quick and dead, you might be received with a *well done* good and *faithful servant*, *enter thou into the joy of the Lord*.

But, as God has given you five talents ; as he has placed you above the necessities of life ; as he has enriched you with many gifts of fortune, and left you nothing to do, but to make the best use of a variety of blessings, to study your own perfection, the honor of God, and the good of your neighbour ; so it is now your duty, to imitate the greatest servants of God ; to inquire, how the most eminent saints have lived ; to study all the arts and methods of perfection, and to set no bounds to your love and gratitude to the bountiful Author of so many blessings.

It is now your duty, to turn your five talents into five more ; and to consider, how your time, and leisure, and health, and fortune, may be made so many happy means of purifying your own soul, improving your fellow creatures in the ways of virtue, and of carrying you at last to the greatest heights of eternal glory.

As you have no mistress to serve ; so let your own soul be the object of your daily care and attendance.

Be sorry for its impurities and imperfections ; and study all the holy arts of restoring it to its natural and primitive purity. Delight in its service, and beg of God to adorn it with every grace and perfection. Nourish it with good works, give it peace in solitude, get it strength in prayer, make it wise with reading, enlighten it by meditation, make it tender with love, sweeten it with humility, humble it with patience, enliven it with psalms

and hymns, and comfort it with frequent reflections upon future glory. Keep it in the presence of God, and teach it to imitate those guardian angels, who, though they attend to human affairs, and the lowest of mankind ; yet *always behold the face of our Father, which is in heaven.*

This, Serena, is your profession. For as sure, as God is one God ; so sure it is, that he has but one command to all mankind, whether they be bond or free, rich or poor ; and that is, to act up to the excellency of that nature, which he has given them ; to live by reason ; to walk in the light of religion, to use every thing as wisdom directs ; to glorify God in all his gifts, and dedicate every condition of life to his service.

This is the one common command of God to all mankind. If you have an employment ; you are to be thus reasonable, pious, and holy in the exercise of it ; if you have time, and a fortune in your own power ; you are obliged to be thus reasonable, holy, and pious, in the use of all your time and all your fortune.

The right religious use of every thing, and every talent, is the indispensable duty of every being, that is capable of knowing right and wrong. For the reason, why we are to do any thing as unto God, and with regard to our duty, and relation to him ; is the same reason, why we are to do every thing as unto God, and with regard to our relation to him. That, which is a reason for our being wise and holy in the discharge of all our business ; is the same reason for our being wise and holy in the use of all our money.

As we have always the same nature, and are every where servants of the same God ; as every place is equally full of his presence, and every thing is equally his gift ; so we must always act according to the reason of our nature ; we must do every thing, as servants of God ; we must live in every place, as in his presence ; we must use every thing, as that ought to be used, which belongs to God.

Either this piety, and wisdom, and devotion is to go through every way of life, and to extend to the use of every thing ; or it is to go through no part of life. If

we might forget ourselves, or forget God ; if we might disregard our reason, and live by humor and fancy in any thing, or at any time, or in any place ; it would be as lawful to do the same in every thing, at every time, and every place.

If, therefore, some people fancy that they must be grave and solemn at church, but may be silly and frantic at home ; that they must live by some rule on the Sunday, but may spend other days by chance ; that they must have some times of prayer, but may waste the rest of their time, as they please ; that they must give some money in charity, but may squander away the rest, as they have a mind ; such people have not enough considered the nature of religion, or the true reasons of piety.

For he, that upon principles of reason, can tell why it is good to be wise and heavenly minded at church ; can tell that it's always desirable, to have the same tempers in all other places. He, that truly knows, why he should spend any time well ; knows that it is never allowable to throw any time away. He, that rightly understands the reasonableness and excellency of charity ; will know, that it can never be excusable, to waste any of our money in pride and folly, or in any needless expense.

For every argument, that shows the wisdom and excellency of charity, proves the wisdom of spending all our fortune well. Every argument, that proves the wisdom and reasonableness of having times of prayer ; shows the wisdom and reasonableness of losing none of our time.

If any one could show, that we need not always act, as in the divine presence ; that we need not consider and use every thing, as the gift of God ; that we need not always live by reason, and make religion the rule of all our actions ; the same arguments would show, that we need never act, as in the presence of God ; nor make religion and reason the measure of any of our actions.

If, therefore, we are to live unto God at any time, or in any place ; we are to live unto him at all times, and all places. If we are to use any thing, as the gift of God ; we are to use every thing, as his gift. If we are to do any thing by strict rules of reason and piety ; we ought



to do every thing in the same manner. Because reason, and wisdom, and piety are as much the best things at all times, and in all places, as at any time, or in any place.

If it is our glory and happiness, to have a rational nature, that is capable of imitating the divine nature; then it must be our glory and happiness, to improve our reason and wisdom; to act up to the excellency of our rational nature, and to imitate God in all our actions, to the utmost of our power. They therefore, who confine religion to times and places, and some little rules of retirement; who think that it is being too strict and rigid to introduce religion into common life, and make it give law to all their actions; they, who think thus, mistake the whole nature of religion. For surely they mistake the whole nature of religion, who can think any part of their life is made more easy, for being free from it.

They may well be said to mistake the whole nature of wisdom, who don't think it desirable to be always wise. He has not learnt the nature of piety, who thinks it too much to be pious in all his actions. He does not sufficiently understand, what reason is, who does not earnestly desire to live in every thing according to it.

If we had a religion, that consisted in absurd superstitions; that had no regard to the perfection of our nature; people might well be glad to have some part of their life excused from it. But, as the religion of the Gospel, is the refinement and exaltation of our best faculties; as it only requires a life of the highest reason; as it only requires us to use this world, as in reason it ought to be used; to live in such tempers, as are the glory of intelligent beings; to walk in such wisdom, as exalts our nature; and to practise such piety, as will raise us to God; who can think it grievous, to live always in the spirit of such a religion; to have every part of his life full of it; but he, that would think it much more grievous to be, as the angels of God in heaven?

Farther, as God is one and the same Being, always acting suitably to his own nature; so it is the duty of every being, that he has created, to live according to the nature, he has given it.

It is therefore an immutable law of God, that all rational beings act reasonably in all their actions ; not at this time, or in that place, or upon this occasion, or in the use of some particular thing ; but at all times, in all places, on all occasions, and in the use of all things. This law is as unchangeable, as God ; and can no more cease to be, than God can cease to be.

When, therefore, any being, that is endued with reason, does an unreasonable thing ; it sins against the great law of its nature, and against God the author of that nature.

They, therefore, who plead for indulgences and vanities ; for any foolish fashions, customs, and humors of the world ; for the misuse of time or money ; plead for rebellion against our nature, for a rebellion against God, who has given us reason for no other end, than to make it the rule and measure of all our ways of life.

When, therefore, you are guilty of any folly or extravagance, or indulge any vain temper ; don't consider it, as a small matter, because it may seem so, if compared to some other sins ; but consider it, as it is, acting contrary to your nature, and then you will see that there is nothing small, that is unreasonable. Because all unreasonable ways are contrary to the nature of all rational beings, whether men or angels. Neither of which can be any longer agreeable to God, than so far as they act according to the reason and excellence of their nature.

The infirmities of human life make such food and raiment necessary for us, as angels do not want ; but then it is no more allowable for us, to turn these necessities into follies, and indulge ourselves in the luxury of food, or the vanities of dress, than it is allowable for angels, to act below the dignity of their proper state.—For a reasonable life, and a wise use of our proper condition, is as much the duty of all men, as it is the duty of all angels and intelligent beings. These are not speculative flights, or imaginary notions, but plain and undeniable laws, founded in the nature of rational beings, who, as such, are obliged to live by reason, and glorify God by

a continual right use of their several faculties. So that, though men are not angels ; yet they may know for what ends, and by what rules men are to live and act, by considering the state and perfection of angels. Our blessed Saviour has plainly turned our thoughts this way, by making this petition a constant part of all our prayers, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* A plain proof, that the obedience of men, is to imitate the obedience of angels ; and that rational beings on earth, are to live unto God, as rational beings in heaven live unto him.

When, therefore, you would represent to your mind, how Christians ought to live unto God, and in what degrees of wisdom and holiness they ought to use the things of this life ; you must not look at the world, but you must look up to God and the society of angels, and think, what wisdom and holiness is fit to prepare you for such a state of glory ; you must look to the highest precepts of the gospel ; you must examine yourself by the spirit of Christ ; you must think, how the wisest men in the world have lived ; you must think, how departed souls would live, if they were again to act the short part of human life ; you must think, what degrees of wisdom and holiness you will wish for, when you are leaving the world.

Now this is not overstraining the matter, or proposing to ourselves any needless perfection. It is but barely complying with the apostle's advice, where he says, *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true ; whatsoever things are just ; whatsoever things are pure ; whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise ; think on these things.* For no one can come near the doctrine of this passage, but he, that proposes to himself to do every thing in this life, as a servant of God ; to live by reason in every thing, he does ; and to make the wisdom and holiness of the Gospel, the rule and measure of his desiring and using every gift of God.

## CHAP. VI.

*Containing the great obligations, and advantages of making a wise and religious use of our estates.*

As Christianity consecrates all states and employments of life unto God ; as it requires us to aspire after universal obedience, doing and using every thing, as servants of God ; so are we more especially obliged to observe this religious exactness in the use of our estates.

The reason of this would appear very plain, if we were only to consider, that our estate is as much the gift of God, as our eyes, or hands ; and is no more to be thrown away at pleasure, than we are to put out our eyes, as we please.

But beside this consideration, there are several other important reasons, why we should be religiously exact in the use of our estates.

*First,* Because the manner of using our money, or spending our estate, enters so far into the business of every day, and makes so great a part of our common life, that our common life must be much of the same nature, as our common way of spending our estate. If reason and religion govern us in this ; then reason and religion hath got great hold of us ; but, if humor, pride, and fancy, are the measures of spending our estates ; then humour, pride, and fancy, will have the direction of the greatest part of our life.

*Secondly,* Another reason for devoting all our estate to right uses, is this, it is capable of being used to the most excellent purposes, and is so great a mean of doing good. If we waste it, we don't waste a trifle ; but we waste that, which might be made, as eyes to the blind, as a husband to the widow, as a father to the orphan ; we waste that, which not only enables us to minister worldly comforts to those, who are in distress ; but that.

which might purchase for ourselves everlasting treasures in heaven. So that, if we part with our money in foolish ways ; we part with a great power of comforting our fellow creatures, and of making ourselves forever blessed.

If there be nothing so glorious, as doing good ; if there is nothing that makes us so like to God ; then nothing can be so glorious in the use of our money, as to use it in works of love and goodness, making ourselves friends, fathers, benefactors, to all our fellow creatures ; imitating the divine love, and turning all our power into acts of generosity, care, and kindness ; to such, as are in need of it.

If a man had eyes, and hands, and feet, that he could give to those, who wanted them ; if he should either lock them up in a chest, or please himself with some needless or ridiculous use of them, instead of giving them to his brethren, who were blind and lame ; should we not justly reckon him an inhuman wretch ? If he should rather choose to amuse himself with furnishing his house with those things, than to entitle himself to an eternal reward, by giving them to those, that wanted eyes and hands, might we not justly reckon him mad ?

Now money has very much the nature of eyes and feet ; if we either lock it up in chests, or waste it in needless and ridiculous expenses upon ourselves, while the poor and distressed want it for necessary uses ; if we consume it in ridiculous ornaments of apparel, while others are starving in nakedness ; we are not far from the cruelty of him, that chooses rather to adorn his house with hands and eyes, than to give them to those, that want them. If we choose to indulge ourselves in such expensive enjoyments, as have no real use in them ; such, as satisfy no real want, rather than to entitle ourselves to an eternal reward, by disposing of our money well ; we are guilty of his madness, that rather chooses to lock up eyes and hands, than to make himself forever blessed, by giving them to those, that want them.

For, after we have satisfied our own reasonable wants, all the rest of our money is like spare eyes, or hands ; it

is something, that we cannot keep to ourselves without being foolish in the use of it ; something, that can only be used well, by giving it to those, who want it.

*Thirdly.* If we waste our money ; we are not only guilty of wasting a talent, which God has given us ; we are not only guilty of making that useless, which is so powerful a mean of doing good ; but we do ourselves this farther harm, that we turn this useful talent into a powerful mean of corrupting ourselves ; because so far, as it is spent wrong, so far it is spent in gratifying some vain and unreasonable desires ; in conforming to those fashions of the world, which, as Christians and reasonable men, we are obliged to renounce.

As wit and fine parts cannot be trifled away and only lost, but will expose those, that have them, to greater follies, if they are not strictly devoted to piety ; so money, if it is not used strictly according to reason and religion, cannot only be trifled away, but it will betray people into greater follies, and make them live a more extravagant life, than they could have done without it. If, therefore, you don't spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the hurt of yourself. You will act, like a man, that should refuse to give that, as a cordial to a sick friend, though he could not drink it himself without inflaming his blood. For this is the case of superfluous money, if you give it to those, that want it, it is a cordial ; if you spend it upon yourself in something, that you do not want ; it only inflames and disorders your mind, and makes you worse than you would be without it.

Consider again the forementioned comparison : if the man, that would not make a right use of spare eyes and hands, should by continually trying to use them himself, spoil his own eyes and hands ; we might justly accuse him of still greater madness.

Now this is truly the case of riches, spent upon ourselves in vain and needless expenses ; in trying to use them, where they have no real use, we only use them to our hurt, in creating unreasonable desires, in nourishing ill tempers, in indulging our passions, and support-

ing a worldly turn of mind. For high eating and drinking, fine clothes, and fine houses, state and equipage, gay pleasures and diversions, do all of them naturally hurt and disorder our hearts; they are the food and nourishment of the folly and weakness of our nature, and are certain means, to make us vain and worldly in our temper. They are the support of something, that ought not to be supported; they are contrary to that sobriety and piety of heart, which relishes divine things; they are like so many weights upon our minds, that make us less able, and less inclined to raise our thoughts and affections to things above.

So that money, thus spent, is not merely wasted or lost; but it is spent to bad purposes, to the corruption and disorder of our hearts, and to the making us less able to live up to the sublime doctrines of the Gospel.

It is like keeping money from the poor, to buy poison for ourselves.

For so much, as is spent in the vanity of dress, may be reckoned so much laid out, to fix vanity in our minds. So much, as is laid out for idleness and indulgence, may be reckoned so much given, to render our hearts dull and sensual. So much as is spent, in state and equipage, may be reckoned so much spent, to dazzle your own eyes, and render you the idol of your own imagination. So in every thing, when you go from reasonable wants, you only support some unreasonable temper; some turn of mind, which every good Christian is called upon to renounce.

So that on all accounts, whether we consider our fortune, as a talent and trust from God; or the good that it enables us to do; or the harm, it does to ourselves, if idly spent; on all these accounts it appears, that it is absolutely necessary, to make reason and religion the strict rule of using all our fortune.

Every exhortation in Scripture to be wise and reasonable, satisfying only such wants, as God would have satisfied; every exhortation to be spiritual and heavenly, pressing after a glorious change of our nature; every exhortation to love our neighbour, as ourselves; to love

all mankind, as God has loved them ; is a command, to be strictly religious in the use of our money. For none of these can be complied with, unless we be wise and reasonable, spiritual and heavenly, exercising brotherly love, a godlike charity in the use of all our fortune.

This use of our worldly goods, is so much the doctrine of the New Testament, that you cannot read a chapter, without being taught something of it. I shall only produce one remarkable passage of Scripture, which is sufficient to justify all, that I have said concerning this religious use of our fortune.

“ When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him ; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats ; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.—Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ; for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; naked, and ye clothed me not ; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

I have quoted this passage at length, because, if one look at the way of the world, one would hardly think, that Christians had ever read this part of Scripture.—For what is there in the lives of Christians, that looks, as if their salvation depended upon these good works ?

Yet the necessity of them is here asserted in the highest manner, and pressed upon us by a lively description of the glory and terrors of the day of judgment.



Some people, even of those, who may be reckoned virtuous Christians, look upon this text, only as a general recommendation of occasional works of charity; whereas it shows the necessity, not only of occasional charities, but of such an entire charitable life, as is a continual exercise of all such works of charity, as we are able to perform.

You own, that you have no title to salvation if you have neglected these good works ; because such persons, as neglect them, are at the last day to be placed on the left hand, and banished with a Depart, ye cursed. There is therefore no salvation, but in the performance of these good works. Who is it, therefore, that may be said to have performed these good works ? Is it he, that has sometimes assisted a prisoner, or relieved the poor or sick ? This would be as absurd, as to say, that he had performed the duties of devotion, who had sometimes said his prayers. Is it therefore he, that has several times done these works of charity ? This can no more be said, than he can be said to be the truly just man, who had done acts of justice several times. 'What is the rule therefore, or measure of performing these good works ?

The rule is very plain and easy, and such as is common to every other virtue, or good temper as well, as to charity. Who is the humble, or meek, or devout, or just, or faithful man ? Is it he, that has several times done acts of humility, meekness, devotion, justice, or fidelity ? No. But it is he, that lives in the habitual exercise of these virtues. In like manner he only can be said to have performed these works of charity, who lives in the habitual exercise of them to the utmost of his power. He only has performed the duty of divine love, who loves God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his strength ; and he only has performed these good works, who has done them with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. For there is no other measure of our doing good, than our power of doing it.

The Apostle Peter puts this question to our blessed

*Saviour, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ; till seven times ? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times ; but until seventy times seven.* Not, as if, after this number of offences, a man might then cease to forgive ; but the expression of seventy times seven ; is to show us that we are not to bound our forgiveness by any number of offences, but are to continue forgiving the most repeated offences against us. Thus our Saviour saith in another place, if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent ; thou shalt forgive him. If, therefore, a man cease to forgive his brother, because he has forgiven him often already ; if he excuse himself from forgiving this man, because he has forgiven several others ; such a one breaks this law of Christ, concerning forgiving one's brother.

Now the rule of forgiving is also the rule of giving ; you are not to give, or do good to seven, but to seventy times seven. You are not to cease from giving, because you have given often to the same person, or to other persons ; but must look upon yourself as much obliged to continue relieving those, that continue in wants, as you were obliged to relieve them once, or twice. Had it not been in your power, you had been excused from relieving any person once ; but, if it is in your power to relieve people often, it is as much your duty to do it often, as it is the duty of others to do it but seldom, because they are but seldom able. He, that is not ready to forgive every brother as often, as he wants to be forgiven, does not forgive, like a disciple of Christ ; and he, that is not ready to give to every brother, that wants to have something given him, does not give, like a disciple of Christ. For it is as necessary, to give to seventy times seven ; to live in the continual exercise of all good works to the utmost of our power, as it is to forgive until seventy times seven.

The reason of all this is very plain, because there is the same goodness, the same excellency, and the same necessity of being thus charitable at one time, as at another. It is as much the best use of our money, to be al-

ways doing good with it, as it is the best use of it at any particular time ; so that what is a reason for a charitable action, is as good a reason for a charitable life. That, which is a reason for forgiving one offence, is the same reason for forgiving all offences. For such charity has nothing to recommend it to day, but what will be the same recommendation of it tomorrow ; and you cannot neglect it at one time, without being guilty of the same sin, as if you neglected it at another time.

As sure, therefore, as these works of charity are necessary to salvation, so sure is it, that we are to do them to the utmost of our power ; not to day, or tomorrow, but through the whole course of our life. If, therefore, it be our duty at any time, to deny ourselves any needless expenses ; to be moderate and frugal ; that we may have to give to those, that want ; it is as much our duty, to do so at all times, that we may be farther able to do more good ; for, if it is at any time a sin, to prefer needless, vain expense, to works of charity ; it is so at all times ; because charity as much excels all needless and vain expense at one time, as at another. So that if it is ever necessary to our salvation, to take care of these works of charity, and to see that we make ourselves in some degree capable of doing them ; it is as necessary to our salvation, to take care to make ourselves as capable, as we can be, of performing them in all the parts of our life.

Either therefore you must so far renounce your Christianity, as to say, you need never perform any of these good works ; or you must own that you are to perform them all your life in as high a degree, as you are able. There is no middle way, any more, than there is a middle way between pride and humility, or temperance and intemperance. If you do not strive to fulfil all charitable works ; if you neglect any of them, that are in your power, and deny assistance to those, that want, what you can give, let it be when it will, or where it will, you number yourself among those, that want Christian charity. Because it is as much your duty to do good with all that you have, and to live in the continual ex-

ercise of good works, as it is your duty to be temperate in all, that you eat and drink.

Hence also appears the necessity of renouncing all those foolish and unreasonable expenses, which the pride and folly of mankind have made so fashionable in the world. For if it is necessary to do good works as far, as you are able ; it must be as necessary to renounce those needless ways of spending money, which render you unable to do works of charity.

You must therefore no more conform to these ways of the world, than you must conform to the vices of the world ; you must no more spend with those, that idly waste their money, as their own humour leads them, than you must drink with the drunken, or indulge yourself with the epicure ; because a course of such expense is no more consistent with a life of charity, than excess in drinking is consistent with a life of sobriety. When, therefore, any one tells you of the lawfulness of expensive apparel ; of the innocency of pleasing yourself with costly satisfactions ; only imagine that the same person told you, that you need not do works of charity ; that Christ does not require you to do good unto your poor brethren, as unto him ; and then you will see the wickedness of such advice ; for to tell you that you may live in such expense, as to make it impossible for you to live in the exercise of good works, is the same thing, as telling you that you need not have any care about such good works themselves.

## CHAP. VII.

*How the imprudent use of an estate corrupts the temper of the mind, and fills the heart with frivolity; represented in the character of FLAVIA.*

It has been observed, that a prudent and religious care is to be used, in the manner of spending our money, because the manner of spending our estate makes so great a part of the business of every day; that, according, as we are wise, or imprudent, in this respect, the whole course of our lives will be rendered wise, or foolish.

Persons, well affected to religion, that receive instructions of piety with pleasure, often wonder, how it comes to pass, that they make no greater progress in that religion, which they so much admire. The reason of it is, because religion lives only in their head, but something else has possession of their hearts; therefore they continue from year to year mere admirers of piety, without ever coming up to the reality of its precepts.

If it be asked, why religion does not get possession of their hearts; the reason is, not because they live in gross sins, for their regard to religion preserves them from such disorders; but because their hearts are constantly employed, perverted, and kept in a wrong state, by the indiscreet use of such things, as are lawful to be used.

The enjoyment of their estates is lawful; therefore it never comes into their heads, to imagine any great danger from that quarter. They never reflect, that there is a vain, and imprudent use of their estates, which, though it does not destroy, like gross sins; yet so disorders the heart, and supports it in such sensuality, pride and vanity, as makes it incapable of receiving the life and spirit of piety.

For our souls may receive an infinite hurt, and be rendered incapable of all virtue, merely by the use of innocent and lawful things.

What is more innocent, than rest and retirement? Yet what more dangerous, than sloth and idleness? What is more lawful, than eating and drinking? Yet what more destructive of virtue; what more fruitful of all vice, than indulgence?

How lawful and praiseworthy is the care of a family! Yet how certainly are many people rendered incapable of all virtue, by a worldly and solicitous temper!

Now it is for want of religious exactness in the use of these innocent and lawful things, that religion cannot get possession of our hearts. It is in the prudent management of ourselves, as to these things, that the art of holy living chiefly consists.

Gross sins are plainly seen, and easily avoided by persons, that profess religion. But the indiscreet use of innocent and lawful things, as it does not offend our conscience; so it is difficult, to make people sensible of the danger of it.

A gentleman, who spends his estate in sports; and a woman, that lays out her fortune upon herself; can hardly be persuaded, that the spirit of religion cannot subsist in such a way of life.

These persons may live free from debaucheries; they may be friends of religion so far, as to speak well of it, and admire it in their imaginations; but it cannot govern their hearts, and be the spirit of their actions, till they change their way of life, and let religion give law to the spending of their estates.

For a woman, who loves dress; that thinks no expense too great, to bestow upon the adorning of her person, cannot stop there. For that temper draws a thousand other follies with it; and will render the whole course of her life, her conversation, her hopes, her fears, her taste, her pleasures, and diversions, all suitable to it.

Flavia and Miranda are two maiden sisters, who have each of them two hundred pounds a year. They buried

their parents twenty years ago, and have since that time spent their estate as they pleased.

Flavia has been the wonder of her friends, for her excellent management, in making so surprising a figure on so moderate a fortune. Several ladies, that have twice her fortune, are not able always to be so genteel, and so constant at all places of pleasure and expense. She has every thing in fashion, and is in every place, where there is any diversion. Flavia is very orthodox; she talks warmly against heretics, and schismatics, is generally at church, and often at the sacrament. She once commended a sermon against the pride and vanity of dress; and thought it was very just against Lucinda, whom she takes to be a great deal finer than she need be. If any one ask Flavia, to do something in charity; if she like the person, who makes the proposal, or happen to be in a right temper; she will toss him a crown, and tell him, if he knew, what a long milliner's bill she had just received, he would think it a great deal for her to give. A quarter of a year after this she hears a sermon upon the necessity of charity; she thinks the man preaches well, that it is a very proper subject, that people want much to be put in mind of it; but she applies nothing to herself, because she remembers that she gave a crown some time ago, when she could so ill spare it.

As for poor people, she will admit no complaints from them; she is very positive, they are all cheats and liars, and will say any thing, to get relief; and therefore it must be a sin, to encourage them in their evil ways.

You would think Flavia had the tenderest conscience in the world, if you saw, how scrupulous and apprehensive she is of the danger of giving amiss.

She buys all books of wit and humor; and has made an expensive collection of all our English Poets. For, she says, one cannot have a true taste of any of them, without being very conversant with them all.

She will sometimes read a book of piety; if it is a

short one ; if it is much commended for style and language, and she can tell where to borrow it.

Flavia is very idle, and yet very fond of fine works ; this makes her often sit working in bed until noon, and be told many a long story before she is up ; so that I need not tell you, that her morning devotions are not always rightly performed.

Flavia would be a miracle of piety, if she were half so careful of her soul, as she is of her body. The rising of a pimple in her face, will make her keep her room two or three days ; and she thinks they are very rash people, that do not take care of things in time. This makes her so overcareful of her health, that she never thinks she is well enough ; and so overindulgent, that she never can be really well. So that it costs her a great deal in sleeping draughts, and waking draughts, in spirits for the head, in drops for the nerves, in cordials for the stomach, and in saffron for her tea.

If you visit Flavia on Sunday ; you will always meet good company ; you will know, what is doing in the world ; you will hear the last lampoon ; be told, who wrote it, and who is meant by every name in it. You will hear, what plays were acted that week ; which is the finest song in the opera, and what games are most in fashion. Flavia thinks they are atheists, that play at cards on Sunday ; but she will tell you the nicety of all the games, what cards she held, how she played them, and all, that happened at play as soon, as she comes from church. If you would know, who is rude, who is vain and foppish, who lives too high, and who is in debt ; if you would know, what is the quarrel at a certain house, or who and who are in love ; if you would know, how late Belinda comes home at night, what clothes she has bought, and what a long story, she told at such a place ; if you would know, how cross Lucius is to his wife, what ill-natured things he says to her, when nobody hears him ; if you would know, how they hate one another in their hearts, though they appear so kind in public ; you must visit Flavia on Sunday. But still she has so great a regard for the holiness of the day,



that she has turned a poor old widow out of her house, as a profane wretch, for having been found once mending her clothes on Sunday night.

Thus lives Flavia ; and, if she live ten years longer, she will have spent about fifteen hundred and sixty Sunday after this manner. She will have wore about two hundred different suits of clothes. Out of this thirty years of her life, fifteen of them will have been disposed of in bed ; and of the remaining fifteen, about fourteen of them will have been consumed in eating, drinking, dressing, visiting, reading and hearing plays and romances, at operas, assemblies, balls, and diversions. For you may reckon all the time, she is up, thus spent, except about an hour and a half, that is disposed of at church most Sundays in the year. With great management and economy, she will have spent sixty hundred pounds upon herself, bating only some shillings, in accidental charities.

I shall not say, it is impossible for Flavia to be saved ; but thus much must be said, that she has no grounds from Scripture to think she is in the way of salvation. For her whole life is in direct opposition to those tempers and practices, which the Gospel has made necessary to salvation.

If you were to hear her say that she had lived all her life, like Anne the prophetess, *who departed not from the temple ; but served God with fastings and prayers night and day ;* you would look upon her as very extravagant ; and yet this would be no greater an extravagance, than for her to say, that she had been *striving to enter in at the strait gate*, or making any one doctrine of the Gospel a rule of her life.

She may as well say that she lived with our Saviour, when he was upon earth, as that she has lived in imitation of him, or made it her care, to live in such a temper, as he required of all his disciples. She may as truly say, she has every day washed the saints' feet, as that she has lived in Christian humility and poverty of spirit ; and as reasonably think that she has taught a charity-school, as that she has lived in works of charity. She has as much reason to think that she has been a cen-

tinel in an army, as that she has lived in self denial. It may as fairly be said, she lived by the labor of her hands, as that she had *given all diligence to make her calling and election sure.*

Here it is well to be observed, that the vain turn of mind, the irreligion, the folly and vanity of this whole life of Flavia, is all owing to the manner of using her estate. It is this, that has formed her spirit; that has supported every trifling passion, and kept her from all thought of a prudent, useful, and devout life.

When her parents died, she had no thought about her two hundred pounds a year, but that she had so much money to do, what she would with, to spend upon herself, and purchase the gratification of her passions.

It is this setting out, this false judgment, and indiscreet use of her fortune, that has filled her whole life with indiscretion, and kept her from thinking, what is right, and wise, and pious in every thing.

If you have seen her delighted in plays and romances, in scandal and backbiting, easily flattered, and soon affronted: if you have seen her devoted to pleasure and diversion, a slave to every passion, nice in every thing, that concerned her body or dress, careless of every thing, that might benefit her soul, always wanting some new entertainment: it was because she had purchased these tempers with the yearly revenue of her fortune.

She might have been humble, serious, devout, a lover of prayer and retirement, careful of her time, diligent in good works, full of charity and the love of God; had not the imprudent use of her estate forced the contrary tempers upon her.

It is no wonder, that she turned her time, her mind, her health and strength to the same uses, she turned her fortune. It is owing to her being wrong in so great an article of life, that you can see nothing wise, or reasonable, or pious in any other part of it.

Now, though the irregular trifling spirit of this character belongs, I hope, but to few people; yet many may here learn some instruction from it, and perhaps see something of their own spirit in it.

For, as Flavia was undone by the unreasonable use of her fortune ; so the lowness of most people's virtue, the imperfections of their piety, and the disorders of their passions, is generally owing to their imprudent use and enjoyment of lawful and innocent things.

More people are kept from a true sense of religion by a regular kind of sensual indulgence, than by gross drunkenness. More men live regardless of the great duties of piety, through too great a concern for worldly goods, than through direct injustice.

This man would perhaps be devout, if he were not so great a virtuoso. Another is deaf to all motives to piety, by indulging a slothful temper.

Could you cure this man of his curiosity, or that of his false thirst after learning ; you need do no more, to make them both men of great piety.

If this woman would make fewer visits, or that not be always talking ; they would neither of them find it half so hard, to be affected with religion.

For all these things are only little, when they are compared to great sins ; and, though they are little in that respect, yet they are great, as they are hindrances of a pious spirit.

For, as consideration is the only eye of the soul ; as the truths of religion can be seen by nothing else ; so, whatever raises levity of mind, a trifling spirit, renders the soul incapable of apprehending and relishing the doctrines of piety.

Would we therefore make real progress in religion ; we must not only abhor gross sins ; but we must regulate the innocent and lawful parts of our behaviour, and put the most common actions of life under the rules of discretion and piety.

## CHAP. VIII.

*How the wise and pious use of an estate naturally carrieth us to great perfection in the virtues of the Christian life, represented in the character of Miranda.*

ANY one pious regularity in any one part of our life, is of great advantage, not only on its own account, but as it uses us to live by rule, and think of the government of ourselves. A man of business, that has brought one part of his affairs under certain rules, is in a fair way to take the same care of the rest. So he, that has brought any one part of his life under the rules, of religion, may thence be taught to extend the same regularity to other parts of his life.

If any one think his time too precious, to be disposed of by chance; If he lay himself under a necessity of observing, how every day goes through his hands, and oblige himself to a certain order of time in his business, his retirements, and devotions; it is hardly to be imagined, how soon such a conduct would reform, improve, and perfect the whole course of his life.

He, that once knows the value and reaps the advantage of time well ordered, will not long be a stranger to the value of any thing else.

A rule, that relates even to the smallest part of our life, is of great benefit to us, merely as it is a rule. For, as the proverb saith, *He, that has begun well, has half done*; so he, that has begun to live by rule, has gone a great way toward the perfection of his own life.

By rule here must be constantly understood a religious rule, observed upon a principle of duty to God. For, if a man oblige himself to be moderate in his meals, only in regard to his stomach; or abstain from drinking,

only to avoid the head ach ; or be moderate in his sleep, through fear of a lethargy ; he might be exact in these rules, without being a better man for them.

But, when he is moderate in any of these things, out of a sense of Christian sobriety and self-denial, that he may offer to God a more reasonable and holy life ; then the smallest rule of this kind, is the beginning of piety.

For the smallest rule in these matters is of great benefit, as it teaches some part of the government of ourselves ; as it presents God often to our thoughts, and brings a sense of religion into the ordinary actions of life.

If a man, whenever he was in company, where any one swore, talked lewdly, or spoke evil of his neighbour, should make it a rule to himself, either gently to reprove him, or to leave the company as decently, as he could ; he would find that this little rule, like a little leaven, would spread itself through the whole of his life.

If another should oblige himself to abstain on the Lord's day from many lawful things, as travelling, visiting, common conversation on worldly matters ; if he should devote the day, beside the public worship, to reading, devotion, instruction, and works of charity ; would find such a taste of piety raised in his mind, as he was an entire stranger to before.

But the two things, which most want to be under strict rule, and which are the greatest blessings to ourselves and others, when rightly used, are our time and our money. These talents are continual means of doing good.

He, that is piously strict in the wise management of these, has already ascended several steps upon the ladder of Christian perfection.

Miranda, the sister of Flavia, is a sober, reasonable Christian ; as soon, as she was mistress of her time and fortune, it was her first thought, how she might best fulfil every thing, that God required of her in the use of them ; and how she might make the happiest use of this short life. She depends upon the truth of what our blessed Lord hath said, *there is but one thing needful* ; and there-

fore makes her whole life one continual labor after it. She has but one reason for doing or not doing, for liking, or not liking any thing ; and that is the will of God. She is not so weak, as to pretend to add, what is called the fine lady, to the true Christian ; she has renounced the world, to follow Christ in the exercise of humility, charity, devotion, and heavenly affections.

While under her mother, she was forced to live in ceremony, to sit up late at night, to be in the folly of every fashion, and always visiting on Sundays ; to go loaded with finery to the holy sacrament ; to hear profaneness at the play-house, and love intrigues at the opera ; to dance at public places, that fops might admire the fineness of her shape, and the beauty of her motions. The remembrance of this way of life makes her exceedingly careful to atone for it by a contrary behaviour.

Miranda considers all, as due to God ; and so does every thing in his name, and for his sake. This makes her consider her fortune, as the gift of God, which is to be used for the wise and reasonable ends of a Christian and holy life. Her fortune therefore is divided between herself and other poor people, and she has only her part of relief from it. She thinks it the same folly, to indulge herself in needless expenses, as to give to other people, to spend in the same way. Therefore, as she will not give a poor man money, to go to a puppet show ; neither will she allow herself any, to spend in the same manner ; thinking it proper to be as wise herself, as she expects poor men to be. For it is a folly in a poor man, says Miranda, to waste what is given him in trifles, while he wants meat, drink and clothes ; and is it less folly, or a less crime in me to spend that money in diversions, which might be so much better spent in imitation of the divine goodness, in works of kindness and charity to my fellow creatures ? If a poor man's necessities are a reason, why he should not waste any of his money idly ; surely the excellency of charity, which is received, as done to Christ himself is a much greater reason, why no one should ever waste

any of his money. For, if he do so, he wastes that, which is wanted for the most noble use, and which Christ himself is ready to receive at his hand. If we are angry at a poor man, when he throws away that, which should buy his own bread; how must we appear in the sight of God, if we make a wanton, idle use of that, which would buy bread and clothes for the hungry and naked, who are as dear to God, as we are, and fellow heirs of the same state of future glory? This is the spirit of Miranda, and thus she uses the gifts of God; she is only one of a certain number of poor people that are relieved out of her fortune, and she only differs from them in the blessedness of giving.

Excepting her victuals, she never spent ten pounds a year on herself. If you saw her, you would wonder, what poor body it was, that was so surprisingly neat and clean. She has but one rule in her dress, to be always clean and in the cheapest things. Every thing about her resembles the purity of her soul, and she is always clean without, because she is always pure within.

Every morning sees her early at her prayers; she rejoices in the beginning of every day, because it begins her pious rules of holy living, and brings the fresh pleasure of repeating them. She seems to be, as a guardian angel, to those, that dwell about her, with her watchings and prayers blessing the place, where she dwells, and making intercession with God for those, that are asleep.

Her devotions have had some intervals, and God has heard several of her private prayers, before the light is suffered to enter into her sister's rooms. Miranda does not know, what it is to have a dull halfday; the returns of her hours of prayer, and her religious exercises, come too often, to let any considerable part of time lie heavy on her hands.

When you see her at work, you see the same wisdom, that governs all her other actions; she is either doing something, that is necessary for herself or for others, who want to be assisted. There is scarcely a poor family in the neighbourhood, but wears something or other,

that has had the labor of her hands. Her wise and pious mind, neither wants the amusement, nor can bear with the folly of idle and impertinent work. She can admit no such folly, as this, in the day, because she is to answer for all her actions at night. When there, ~~is~~ no wisdom, to be observed in the employment of her hands ; when there is no useful or charitable work to be done ; Miranda will work no more. At her table she lives strictly by this rule of holy Scripture, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* This makes her begin and end every meal, as she begins and ends every day, with acts of devotion ; she eats and drinks only for the sake of living, and with so regular an abstinence, that every meal is an exercise of self denial ; and she humbles her body, every time, she is forced to feed it. If Miranda were to run a race for her life, she would submit to a diet, that was proper for it. But, as the race, which is set before her, is a race of holiness, purity and heavenly affection, which she is to finish in a corrupt, disordered body of earthly passions ; so her every day diet has only this one end, to make her body fitter for this spiritual race. She does not weigh her meat in scales ; but she weighs it in a much better balance. So much, as gives proper strength to her body, and renders it able and willing to obey the soul, to join in psalms and prayers, and lift up eyes and hands toward heaven with greater readiness ; so much is Miranda's meal. So that Miranda will never have her eyes swell with fatness, or pant under a heavy load of flesh, till she has changed her religion.

The holy Scriptures, especially of the New Testament, are her daily study ; these she reads with a watchful attention, constantly casting an eye upon herself, and trying herself by every doctrine. When she has the New Testament in her hand, she supposes herself at the feet of our Saviour and his apostles, and makes every thing, that she learns of them, so many laws of her life. She receives their sacred words with as much attention and reverence, as if she saw their per-



sons, and knew that they were just come from heaven, to teach her the way, that leads to it.

She thinks that trying herself every day by the doctrines of Scripture is the only possible way to be ready for her trial at the last day. She is sometimes afraid, that she lays out too much money in books ; because she cannot forbear buying all practical books of any note ; especially such, as enter into the heart of religion, and describe the inward holiness of the Christian. But of all human writings the lives of pious persons, of eminent saints, are her greatest delight. In these she searches, as for hidden treasure ; hoping to find some secret of holy living ; some uncommon degree of piety, which she may make her own. By this mean Miranda has her head and heart stored with all the principles of wisdom and holiness : she is so full of the one main business of life, that she finds it difficult, to converse on any other subject ; and, if you are in her company, when she thinks proper to talk, you must be made wiser and better.

To relate her charity would be to relate the history of every day for twenty years ; for so long has all her fortune been spent that way. She has set up twenty poor tradesmen, who had failed in their business ; and saved as many from failing. She has educated several poor children, that were picked up in the streets, and put them in a way of an honest employment. As soon, as any laborer is confined at home with sickness, she sends him, till he recovers, twice the value of his wages, that he may have one part, to give his family, as usual, and the other to provide things convenient for his sickness.

If a family seem too large, to be supported by the labor of those, that can work in it ; she pays their rent, and gives them something yearly toward their clothing. By this mean there are many poor families, that live in a comfortable manner, and are from year to year blessing her in their prayers.

If there be any poor man or woman, that is more than ordinarily wicked, Miranda has her eye upon them ;

she watches their time of need ; and, if she can discover that they are in any great strait or affliction, she gives them speedy relief. She has this care for this sort of people, because she once saved a very profligate person from being carried to prison, who immediately became a true penitent.

There is nothing in the character of Miranda, more to be admired, than this temper. For this tenderness of affection toward the most abandoned sinners is the highest instance of a godlike soul.

Miranda once passed by a house, where the man and his wife were cursing and swearing at one another in a most dreadful manner, and three children crying about them ; this sight so much affected her compassionate mind, that she went the next day, and bought the three children, that they might not be ruined by living with such wicked parents ; they now live with Miranda, are blessed with her care and prayers, and all the good works, which she can do for them. They hear her talk, they see her live, they join with her in psalms and prayers. The eldest of them has already converted his parents from their wicked life, and shows a turn of mind so remarkably pious, that Miranda intends him for holy orders ; that, being thus saved himself, he may be zealous in the salvation of souls, and do to other miserable objects, as she has done to him.

Miranda is a constant relief to poor people in their misfortunes ; there are sometimes little misfortunes, that happen to them, which of themselves they could never be able to overcome. The death of a cow, or a horse, or some little robbery, would keep them in distress all their lives. She does not suffer them to grieve under such accidents, as these. She immediately gives them the full value of their loss, and makes use of it, as a mean of raising their minds toward God.

She has a great tenderness for old people, that are grown past their labor. The parish allowance to such people is seldom a comfortable maintenance. For this reason they are the constant objects of her care ; she adds so much to their allowance, as somewhat exceeds

the wages, they they got, when young. This she does, to comfort the infirmities of their age ; that, being free from trouble and distress, they may serve God in peace, and tranquillity of mind. She has generally a large number of this kind, who by her charities and exhortations to holiness, spend their last days in great piety and devotion.

Miranda never wants compassion, even to common beggars ; especially toward those, that are old or sick, or full of sores, that want eyes or limbs. She hears their complaints with tenderness, gives them some proof of her kindness, and never rejects them with hard, or reproachful language, for fear of adding affliction to her fellow creatures.

If a poor traveller tell her, that he has neither strength, nor food, nor money left ; she relieves him because he is a stranger. For it is the most noble part of charity, to be kind to those, whom we never saw before. *I was a stranger, and ye took me in*, saith our Saviour ; but who can perform this duty, that will not relieve persons, that are unknown to him ?

Miranda considers, that Lazarus was a beggar ; that he was the care of angels, and carried into Abraham's bosom. She considers, that our Saviour and his apostles were kind to beggars ; that they spoke comfortably to them, healed their diseases, and restored eyes and limbs to the lame and blind. That Peter said to the beggar, that wanted alms from him, *Silver and gold have I none ; but such, as I have, give I thee ; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up, and walk*. Miranda therefore never treats beggars with disregard ; but she imitates the kindness of our Saviour and his apostles toward them ; and, though she cannot, like them, work miracles for their relief ; yet she relieves them with the power she hath ; and may say with the apostle, *Such, as I have, give I thee ; in the name of Jesus Christ*.

It may be, says Miranda, that I may often give to those, who do not deserve it. But what then ? Is not this the very method of divine goodness ? Does not God make *his sun to rise on the evil and on the good ?*

Shall I withhold a little money or food from my fellow creature, for fear he should not be good enough, to receive it of me? Do I beg of God to deal with me, not according to my merit, but according to his own great goodness; and shall I be so absurd, as to withhold my charity from a poor brother, because he may perhaps not deserve it? Beside, where has the Scriptures made merit the rule or measure of charity? On the contrary, the Scriptures say, *If thy enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.* Now this plainly teaches us, that the merit of persons is no rule of our charity, but that we are to do acts of kindness to those, that least deserve it.

When you at any time turn away the poor, the old, the sick and helpless traveller, the lame or the blind; ask yourself this question. Do I sincerely wish these poor creatures may be as happy, as Lazarus, who was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom? It is impossible for any one heartily to wish a poor creature so great a happiness, and not have a heart to give him small alms. For this reason, says Miranda, as far as I can, I give to all, because I pray to God to forgive all; and I cannot refuse alms to those, whom I pray God to bless; but am glad to show some degree of love to such, as, I hope, will be objects of the infinite love of God. *If, it be more blessed to give than to receive; we ought to look on those, that ask our alms, as so many friends and benefactors, that come to do us a greater good, than they can receive; that come to exalt our virtue, to be witnesses of our charity, to be monuments of our love, to be our advocates with God, to be to us in Christ's stead, to appear for us at the day of judgment, and to help us to a blessedness greater than our alms can bestow on them.*

This is the spirit, and this is the life of the devout Miranda; and, if she live ten years longer, she will have spent sixty thousand pounds in charity; for that which she allows herself may fairly be reckoned among her alms.

When she dies she must shine among apostles, and

saints, and martyrs; she must stand among the first servants of God; and be glorious among those, that have fought the good fight, and finished their course with joy.

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## CHAP. IX.

*Containing some reflections on the life of Miranda, and showing how it ought to be imitated by all her sex.*

Now this life of Miranda, which I heartily recommend to the imitation of her sex, however contrary it may seem to the way of the world, is yet suitable to the true spirit, and founded upon the plainest doctrines, of Christianity. To live, as she does, is as truly suitable to the Gospel of Christ, as to be baptized or receive the sacrament. Her spirit is that, which animated the saints of former ages; and it is because they lived, as she does, that we now celebrate their memories, and praise God for their examples. There is nothing whimsical, or unreasonable in her character; but every thing there described, is a proper instance of solid and real piety.

It is as easy to show that it is whimsical to go to church, as that it is whimsical to observe any of these rules of life; for all Miranda's rules of living to God, of spending her time and fortune, of eating, working, dressing and conversing, are as substantial parts of a reasonable and holy life, as devotion and prayer.

For there is nothing to be said for the wisdom of sobriety, of devotion, of charity, or humility, but what is as good an argument for the wise and reasonable use of apparel.

Neither can any thing be said against the folly of luxury, of sensuality, of extravagance, of prodigality, of ambition, of idleness, or indulgence, but what must be

said against the folly of dress. For religion is as deeply concerned in the one, as in the other.

If you may be vain in one thing, you may be in every thing; for one kind of vanity differs from another, as one kind of intemperance differs from another. If you spend your fortune in finery of dress; you cannot condemn prodigality, or extravagance, or luxury, without condemning yourself.

If you fancy that it is your only folly, and that therefore there can be no great matter in it; you are like these, that think they are only guilty of the folly of covetousness, or the folly of ambition. Now though some people may live so plausible a life, as to appear chargeable with no other fault, than that of covetousness or ambition; yet the case is not as it appears; for covetousness or ambition cannot subsist in a heart, that is in other respects rightly devoted to God.

In like manner, though some people may spend most, that they have, in expensive ornaments of dress, and yet seem to be in every other respect truly pious; yet it is certainly false; for it is as impossible for a mind, that is in a true state of religion, to be vain in the use of clothes, as to be vain in alms or devotion. To convince you of this from your own reflections, let us suppose that some eminent saint, for instance, the Virgin Mary was sent into the world, to be again in a state of trial for a few years, and that you were going to her, to be edified by her great piety; would you expect to find her dressed and adorned in fine and expensive clothes? No; you would know in your own mind, that it was as impossible, as to find her learning to dance. Do but add saint, or holy, to any person, either man or woman, and your own mind tells you immediately, that such a character cannot admit of the vanity of fine apparel. A saint, genteelly dressed, is as great nonsense, as an apostle in an embroidered suit; every one's own natural sense convinces him of the inconsistency of these things.

Now what is the reason, that, when you think of a saint or eminent servant of God, you cannot admit the

vanity of apparel? Is it not, because it is inconsistent with a right state of heart, and exalted piety? And is not this therefore a demonstration, that, where such vanity is admitted, there a right state of heart, and exalted piety must be wanted? For as certainly, as the holy Virgin Mary could not indulge herself, or conform to the vanity of the world in dress and figure; so certain is it, that none can indulge themselves in this vanity, but those, who want her piety of heart; and consequently it must be owned, that all needless and expensive finery of dress, is the effect of a disordered heart, that is not governed by the true spirit of religion.

Covetousness is not a crime, because there is any harm in gold or silver; but because it supposes a foolish and unreasonable state of mind, that is fallen from its true good, and sunk into a poor and wretched satisfaction.

In like manner, the expensive finery of dress, is not a crime, because there is any thing good or evil in clothes; but because the expensive ornaments of clothing shows a foolish and unreasonable state of heart, that is fallen from right notions of human nature, that abuses the end of clothing, and turns the necessities of life into so many instances of pride and folly.

All the world agree in condemning remarkable fops. Now what is the reason of it? Is it because there is any thing sinful in their particular dress, or affected manners? No; but it is because all people know that it shows the state of a man's mind, and that it is impossible for so ridiculous an outside to have any thing wise or reasonable within. Indeed to suppose a fop of great piety, is as much nonsense, as to suppose a coward of great courage. So that all the world agree in owning, that the use and manner of clothes is a mark of the state of a man's mind, and consequently that it is a thing highly essential to religion. But then it should be well considered, that not only the sot is guilty of intemperance; but every one, that transgresses the right measure of eating and drinking; so it should be considered, that it is not only the fop, that is guilty of the vanity

and abuse of dress ; but every one, that departs from the reasonable ends of clothing.

As, therefore, every argument against sottishness is as good an argument against all kinds of intemperance ; so every argument against the vanity of fops, is as good an argument against all vanity of dress. For they are all of the same kind, and only differ, as one degree of intemperance may differ from another. She, that only paints a little, may as justly accuse another, because she paints a great deal ; as she, that uses but a common finery of dress, accuses another, that is excessive in her finery.

To make the way of the world our measure in these things is as absurd, as to make the way of the world the measure of our sobriety, abstinence, or humility.

This therefore is the way, that you are to judge of the crime of vain apparel ; you are to consider it as an offence against the proper use of clothes, as covetousness is an offence against the proper use of money ; you are to consider it, as an offence against all those texts of Scripture, that command you to love your neighbour, as yourself, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and do all works of charity, that you are able ; so that you must not deceive yourself with saying where can be the harm of clothes ? For the covetous man might as well say, where can be the harm of gold or silver ?

There is therefore nothing right in the use of clothes but the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel. Every other use of things (however polite and fashionable) disorders the heart, and is inconsistent with that inward state of piety, that wisdom of mind, and regularity of affection, which Christianity requireth.

If you would be a good Christian, there is but one way ; you must live wholly unto God, you must live according to the wisdom, that comes from God ; you must act according to the nature and value of things ; you must live in the exercise of holy and heavenly affections, and use all the gifts of God to his praise and glory.

Some persons perhaps, who admire the purity and



perfection of this life of Miranda, may say, how can it be proposed, as a common example ? How can we, who are married, or we who are under the direction of our parents, imitate such a life.

It is answered, just as you may imitate the life of our blessed Saviour and his apostles. The circumstances of our Saviour's life, and the condition of his apostles, were more different from yours, than that of Miranda's ; yet their life, is the common example, that is proposed to all Christians.

It is their spirit therefore, their piety, their love of God you are to imitate, and not the particular form of their life. Act under God, as they did ; direct your common actions to that end, which they did ; glorify your proper state with such love of God, such charity to your neighbor, such humility and self-denial, as they did ; and then, though you are only teaching your own children, and St. Paul is converting whole nations ; yet you are following his steps, and acting after his example.

Do not think therefore, that you cannot or need not be like Miranda, because you are not in her state of life ; for as the same spirit would have made Miranda a saint, though she had been forced to labor for a maintenance ; so if you will but aspire after her spirit, every condition of life will furnish you sufficient means of employing it.

Miranda is, what she is, because she does every thing in the name, and with regard to God ; and, when you do the same, you will be exactly like her, though you are ever so different from her in the outward state of your life.

You are married, you say ; therefore you have not your time and fortune in your power, as she has. It is very true ; and therefore you cannot spend so much time, nor so much money, in the manner she does.

But Miranda's perfection does not consist in this, that she spends so much time, or so much money in such a manner ; but that she is careful to make the best use of all that time, and all that fortune which God has put into her hands. Do you therefore make the best use of

all that time and money which is in your disposal, and then you are like Miranda.

If she has two hundred pounds a year, and you have only two mites, have you not the more reason to be exceeding exact in the use of it? If she has much time, and you have but a little, ought you not to be the more watchful, lest that little be lost?

You say, if you were to imitate the plainness of her dress, you should offend your husbands.

First. Be sure that this is true before you make it an excuse.

Secondly. If your husband do really require you to patch your face, and to be fine and expensive in all your apparel; then take these two resolutions;

First, forbear from all this as soon, as your husband will permit you.

Secondly, use your utmost endeavour to recommend yourself to his affections by such solid virtues, as may correct the vanity of his mind, and teach him to love you for such qualities, as will make you amiable in the sight of God.

This doctrine concerning the plainness and modesty of dress, may perhaps be thought by some to be sufficiently confuted by asking, whether all persons are to be clothed in the same manner?

Let it be supposed, that I had recommended universal plainness of diet. Is it not a thing, sufficiently reasonable, to be universally recommended? But would it thence follow, that the nobleman and the laborer were to live upon the same food?

Suppose I had pressed universal temperance; does not religion justify such a doctrine? But would it therefore follow, that all people were to drink the same liquors, and in the same quantity?

In like manner, though plainness of dress is recommended to all; yet it by no means follows, that all are to be clothed in the same manner.

Now what is the particular rule with regard to temperance? How shall particular persons that use differ-

ent liquors, and in different quantities, preserve their temperance ?

Is not this the rule ? Are they not to guard against indulgence, to make their use of liquors a matter of conscience, and allow of no refreshments, but such, as are consistent with the strictest rules of Christian sobriety ?

Now transfer this rule to the matter of apparel. Let every one guard against the vanity of dress, make the use of clothes a matter of conscience ; and then every one has a rule, that is sufficient to direct him in every state of life.

As the lawfulness of different liquors leaves no room, nor any excuse, for the smallest degree of intemperance in drinking ; so the lawfulness of different apparel leaves no room, nor any excuse, for the smallest degree of vanity in dress.

To ask what is vanity in dress, is no more a puzzling question, than to ask, what is intemperance in drinking. He that lets religion teach him, that the end of drinking is only so far to refresh our spirits, as to keep us in good health, and make soul and body fitter for all the offices of life, will always know, what intemperance is.

So he that lets religion teach him, that the end of clothing is to secure our bodies from the injuries of weather, will always know, what vanity of dress is.

Farther, as all things that are lawful, are not therefore expedient ; so there are some things lawful in the use of liquors and apparel, which by abstaining from them for pious ends, may be made means of great perfection.

Thus for instance, if a man should deny himself such use of liquors, as is lawful ; that he might be able to relieve and refresh the helpless, poor, and sick ; if another should abstain from the use of that, which is lawful in dress ; that he may be more able to clothe other people ; these persons might be said to do that which was highly suitable to the true spirit of Christ.

For, if those who give a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ, shall not lose their reward ; how dear

must they be to him, who often give themselves water, that they may be able to give wine to the sick and languishing members of Christ's body !

All that has been here said to married women, may serve for the same instruction to such, as are still under the direction of their parents. Now, though the obedience, due to parents, does not oblige them to carry their virtues any higher, than their parents require them; yet their obedience requires them to submit to their direction in all things, not contrary to the laws of God.

If, therefore, your parents require you to live more in the fashion of the world, or to be more expensive in your dress, or to dispose of your time otherwise, than suits your desire of perfection ; you must submit and bear it, as your cross, till you have it in your power to choose the best ways of raising your virtue to its greatest height.

Although, while in this state, you may be obliged to forego some means of improving your virtue ; yet there are some others, to be found in it, that are not to be had in a life of more liberty.

For, if in this state, where obedience is so great a virtue, you comply in all things lawful, out of a pious sense of duty ; then those things, which you thus perform, are instead of being hindrances of your virtue, turned into means of improving it. What you lose by being restrained from such things, as you would choose to observe, you gain by that excellent virtue of obedience, in humbly complying against your temper.

What is here granted, is only in things lawful ; therefore the diversion of the stage is here excepted ; being elsewhere proved to be absolutely unlawful.

But as for those, who are in their own hands, if the liberty of their state make them covet the best gifts ; if it carry them to choose the most excellent ways ; if they should turn the whole form of their life into a regular exercise of the highest virtues ; happy are they, who have so learned Christ.

All persons cannot receive this saying. They that are ready to receive it, let them receive it ; and bless

that spirit of God which has put such good motions into their hearts.

God may be served and glorified in every state of life. But, as there are some states more desirable, than others ; that more purify our nature, that more improve our virtues, and dedicate us unto God in a higher manner ; so those, who are at liberty to choose for themselves, seem to be called by God, to be more eminently devoted to his service.

Ever since the beginning of Christianity there have been two orders of people among good Christians. The one, that feared and served God in the common offices of a secular life. The other renouncing the common business and common enjoyments of life, devoted themselves to voluntary poverty, devotion, and retirement, that by this mean they might live wholly unto God in the daily exercise of a heavenly life.

This testimony I have from the ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, who lived at the time of the first general council, when the church was in its greatest glory and purity.

"Therefore," saith he, "there hath been instituted in the church of Christ, two ways or manners of living. The one, raised above the ordinary state of nature, and common ways of living, rejects wedlock, possessions, and worldly goods ; and, being wholly removed from the ordinary conversation of common life, is devoted solely to the worship and service of God, through an exceeding degree of heavenly love.

"They, who are of this order of people, seem dead to this world ; and having their bodies only upon earth, in their minds and contemplations dwell in heaven. Whence they look down on human life, making intercessions to Almighty God for the whole race of man ; and this, not with the blood of beasts, but with the highest exercises of true piety, with cleansed and purified hearts, and with a life, strictly devoted to virtue. These are their sacrifices, which they continually offer unto God, imploring his mercy for themselves, and their fel-

low creatures. Christianity receives this, as the perfect manner of life.

"The other is of a lower form ; and, suiting itself more to the condition of human nature, admits chaste wedlock, and care of children and family, of trade and business ; and goes through all the employments of life under a sense of piety, and fear of God.

"Now they, who have chosen this manner of life, have their set times for retirement and spiritual exercises ; and particular days are set apart for hearing and learning the word of God. This order of people are considered, as in the second state of piety." *Euseb. Dem. Evan. lib. 1. cap. 8.*

If, therefore, persons of either sex, moved by the life of Miranda, and desirous of perfection ; living upon bare necessities, that some might be relieved by their charities, and all be benefitted by their example ; or should practise the same manner of life ; such persons might be justly said to restore that piety, which was the boast and glory of the church, when its greatest saints were alive.

Now as it was an exceeding great degree of heavenly love, that carried these persons so much above the common ways of life to such an eminent state of holiness ; so it is not to be wondered at, that the religion of Jesus should fill the hearts of many Christians with this high degree of love.

For a religion, that opens such a scene of glory ; that discovers things, infinitely above the world ; that so triumphs over death ; that assures us of such mansions of bliss, where we shall so soon be, as the angels of God in heaven ; what wonder is it, if such a religion, such truths and expectations, should in some holy souls, destroy all earthly desires, and make the ardent love of heavenly things, the one continual passion of their hearts ?

If the religion of Christians is founded upon the infinite humiliation, the cruel mockings and scourgings, the prodigious sufferings, the poor, persecuted life, and painful death of the crucified Son of God ; what wonder is

it, if many humble adorers, many affectionate lovers of a crucified Lord, renounce their share of worldly pleasures, and give themselves up to a continual course of mortification, and self denial; that, thus suffering with Christ here, they may reign with him hereafter?

If truth itself hath assured us, that *there is but one thing needful*; what wonder is it that there are some Christians so full of faith, as to believe this in the highest sense of the words, and to desire such a separation from the world, that their care and attention to the one thing needful may not be interrupted?

If our blessed Lord hath said, *If thou wilt be perfect, go, and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, and follow me*; what wonder is it that there are some zealous followers of Christ, so intent upon heavenly treasure, so desirous of perfection, as to renounce the enjoyment of their estates, choose a voluntary poverty, and relieve all the poor, that they are able?

If the chosen vessel, St. Paul, hath said, *He, that is unmarried, careth for the things, that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; and that there is this difference also between a wife and a virgin; the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit*; what wonder is it, if the purity and perfection of the virgin state have been the praise and glory of the church in its first and purest ages? That there have always been some, so desirous of pleasing God, so zealous after every degree of purity and perfection, so glad of every means of improving their virtue, that they have renounced the comforts and enjoyments of wedlock, to trim their lamps, to purify their souls, and wait upon God in a state of perpetual virginity.

If in these days we want examples of these several degrees of perfection; if neither clergy, nor laity are enough of this spirit; if we are so far departed from it, that a man seems, like St. Paul at Athens, a setter forth of strange doctrines, when he recommends self denial,

regular devotion, retirement, and voluntary poverty ; it is because we are fallen into an age, where the love of many, is waxed cold.

I have made this appeal to antiquity, and quoted these passages of Scripture, to support some uncommon practices in the life of Miranda ; and to show, that her highest rules of holy living, her devotion, self denial, charity, and voluntary poverty, are founded in the sublimest counsels of Christ and his apostles, suitable to the high expectations of another life, and followed by the greatest saints of the best and purest ages of the church.

*He, that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

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## CHAP. X.

*Showing how all ranks of men and women of all ages, are obliged to devote themselves to God.*

I shall now show that this regularity of devotion, this holiness of common life, this religious use of every thing, is a devotion, that is the duty of all orders of Christian people.

Fulvius has had a learned education, and taken his degrees in the university ; he came from thence, that he might be free from all rules of life. He takes no employment upon him, nor enters into any business ; because he thinks every employment or business calls people to a careful discharge of its several duties. When grave, he tells you that he did not enter into holy orders, because he looks upon it to be a state, that requires great holiness of life, and that it does not suit



his temper to be so good. He tells you, he never intends to marry ; because he cannot oblige himself to that regularity of life, which he takes to be the duty of those, that are at the head of a family.

Fulvius thinks that he is conscientious in this conduct, and is therefore content with the most idle, impertinent, and careless life. He has no religion, no devotion, no pretence to piety. He lives by no rules, and thinks all is well ; because he is neither a priest, nor a father, nor has any family to look after.

But, Fulvius, you are a rational creature, and as such, are as much obliged to live according to reason, as a priest is obliged to attend at the altar, or a guardian to be faithful to his trust ; if you live contrary to reason, you don't commit a small crime, you don't break a small trust ; but you break the law of your nature ; you rebel against God, who gave you that nature, and put yourself among those, whom the God of reason will punish, as apostates.

Though you have no employment ; yet, as you are baptized into the profession of Christ's religion, you are as much obliged to live according to the holiness of the Christian spirit, and perform all the promises, made at your baptism, as any man is obliged to be honest and faithful in his calling. If you abuse this great calling, you are not false in a small matter, but you abuse the precious blood of Christ ; you crucify the Son of God afresh ; you neglect the highest instances of divine goodness ; you disgrace the church of God ; you abuse the means of grace, and the promises of glory ; and it will be more tolerable for *Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you.*

It is therefore great folly, for any one to think himself at liberty to live, as he pleases, because he is not in such a state of life, as some others are ; for, if there is any thing dreadful in the abuse of any trust ; if there is any thing to be feared for the neglect of any calling ; there is nothing more to be feared, than the wrong use of our reason ; nor any thing more to be dreaded, than

the neglect of our Christian calling ; which is not to serve the little uses of a short life, but to redeem souls unto God, to fill heaven with saints, and finish a kingdom of eternal glory unto God.

No man therefore must think himself excused from the exactness of piety and morality, because he has chosen to be idle and independent in the world ; for the necessity of a reasonable and holy life is not founded in the several conditions and employments of this life, but in the immutable nature of God, and the nature of man. A man is not to be reasonable and holy, because he is a priest, or a father of a family ; but because piety and goodness are the laws of human nature. Could any man please God, without living according to reason ; there would be nothing displeasing to God in an idle priest or a reprobate father. He therefore, that abuses his reason, is like him, that abuses the priesthood ; and he, that neglects the holiness of the Christian life, is as the man, that disregards the most important trust.

If a man choose to put out his eyes rather, than enjoy the light, and see the works of God ; if he voluntarily kill himself, by refusing to eat and drink ; every one would own, that such a one was a rebel against God, and justly deserved his highest indignation. You would not say, that this was only sinful in a priest, or a master of a family, but in every man as such.

Now wherein does the sinfulness of this behaviour consist ? Does it not consist in this, that he abuses his nature, and refuses to act that part, for which God created him ? But, if this be true ; then all persons, that abuse their reason, are like this man, rebels against God, and subject to his wrath.

Let us suppose, that this man, instead of putting out his eyes, had only employed them in looking at ridiculous things, or shut them up in a sleep ; that instead of starving himself to death, by not eating at all, he should turn every meal into a feast, and eat and drink, like an epicure ; could he be said to have lived more to the

glory of God, than if he had put out his eyes, and starved himself to death?

Now do but suppose a man acting unreasonably, and living in a course of folly and impertinence, instead of starving himself to death; and then you have found out as great a rebel against God. For he, that puts out his eyes, or murders himself, has only this guilt, that he abuses the powers, that God has given him; that he refuses to act that part for which he was created, and puts himself into a state, contrary to the divine will. Surely this is the guilt of every one, that lives an unreasonable, unholy, and foolish life.

As, therefore, no particular state is an excuse for self murder; so no particular state, is an excuse for the abuse of our reason, or the neglect of holiness. For surely it is as much the will of God, that we make the best use of our rational faculties, as it is, that we use our eyes, and eat and drink for the preservation of our lives.

Till, therefore, a man can show, that he sincerely endeavours to live according to the will of God; that he is striving to live according to the Christian religion; he has all to answer for, that they have, who abuse the greatest trusts, and neglect the highest calling in the world.

Every body acknowledges, that all orders of men are to be exactly honest and faithful; there is no exception to be made in these duties, for any private or particular state of life. Now if we would attend to the reason and nature of things; if we would consider the nature of God, and the nature of man; we should find the same necessity for every other right use of our reason; we should find it as absurd to suppose, that one man must be exact in piety, and another need not, as to suppose that one man must be exact in honesty, but another need not. For Christian humility, sobriety, devotion, and piety are as great and necessary parts of a reasonable life, as justice and honesty.

On the other hand, pride, sensuality, and covetousness

are as high an abuse of our reason, and as contrary to God, as cheating and dishonesty.

Theft and dishonesty seem indeed to vulgar eyes to be greater sins ; because they are so hurtful to civil society, and are so severely punished by human laws.

But, if we consider mankind in a higher view, as God's society of rational beings, that are to glorify him by the right use of their reason ; we shall find, that every temper, that is equally contrary to reason, that opposes God's designs, and disorders the beauty of the rational world, is equally sinful in man, and equally odious to God. This would show that the sin of sensuality is like the sin of dishonesty, and renders us as great objects of the divine displeasure.

Again, if we consider mankind, as a redeemed order of fallen spirits, that are baptized into a fellowship with the Son of God ; to be temples of the Holy Ghost ; to live according to his inspiration ; to offer to God the reasonable sacrifice of a humble, pious, and thankful life ; to purify themselves from the disorders of their fall ; to make a right use of the means of grace, in order to be sons of eternal glory ; if we look at mankind in this true light ; then we shall find that all tempers, that are contrary to this holy society ; all actions that make us unlike to Christ, that abuse the means of grace, and oppose our hope of glory, have every thing in them, that can make us odious unto God. So that, though pride, and sensuality, and other vices of the like kind, do not hurt civil society, as cheating, and dishonesty do ; yet they hurt that society, and oppose those ends which are more glorious in the eyes of God, than all the societies that relate to this world.

Nothing therefore can be more false, than to imagine, because we are private persons, that have taken upon us no charge or employment of life, that therefore we may live more at large, indulge our appetites, and be less careful of the duties of piety and holiness ; for it is as good an excuse for cheating and dishonesty. Because he, that abuses his reason, that indulges himself in lust

and sensuality, that neglects to act the reasonable part of a true Christian, has every thing in his life to render him hateful to God, that is to be found in cheating and dishonesty.

If, therefore, you rather choose to be an idle epicure, than to be unfaithful; if you rather choose to live in lust and sensuality, than to injure your neighbour in his goods; you have made no better a provision for the favor of God, than he, that rather chooses to rob a house, than to rob a church.

For the abusing of our own nature is as great a disobedience against God, as the injuring our neighbour; and he, that wants piety toward God, has done as much to damn himself, as he, that wants honesty toward men. Every argument therefore, that proves it necessary for all men, in all stations of life, to be truly honest; proves it equally necessary for all men, in all stations of life, to be truly holy and pious.

Again, another argument to prove that all orders of men are obliged to be thus holy and devout in the common course of their lives, in the use of every thing, they enjoy, may be taken from our obligation to prayer. It is granted, that prayer is a duty, that belongs to all states and conditions of men; now, if we inquire into the reason of this, why no state of life is to be excused from prayer; we shall find it as good a reason, why every state of life is to be made a state of piety and holiness in all its parts.

For the reason, why we are to pray unto God, and praise him with hymns and psalms of thanksgiving, is this; because we are to live wholly unto God, and glorify him in all possible ways. It is not, because the praises of words, or forms of thanksgiving, are more particularly parts of piety, or more the worship of God, than other things; but it is, because they are possible ways of expressing our dependance, our obedience, and devotion to God. Now, if this be the reason of verbal praises and thanksgivings to God, because we are to live unto God in all possible ways; then it plainly fol-

lows, that we are equally obliged to worship and glorify God in all other actions, that can be turned into acts of piety and obedience to him ; and, as actions are of much more significancy, than words ; it must be a much more acceptable worship of God, to glorify him in all the actions of our common life, than with any little form of words at any particular times.

Thus, if God is to be worshipped with forms of thanksgiving ; he, that makes it a rule, to be content and thankful in every part and accident of his life, because it comes from God ; praises God in a much higher manner, than he, that has some set time for singing of psalms. He, that dares not say an ill natured word, or do an unreasonable thing, because he considers God, as every where present ; performs a better devotion, than he, that dares not miss the church. To live in the world, as a stranger and a pilgrim, using all its enjoyments, as if we used them not ; making all our actions so many steps toward a better life, is offering a better sacrifice to God, than any forms of holy and heavenly prayers.

To be humble in all our actions, to avoid every appearance of pride and vanity, to be meek and lowly in our words, actions, dress, behaviour, and designs, in imitation of our blessed Saviour, is worshipping God in a higher manner, than they, who have only times to fall low on their knees in devotion. He, that contents himself with necessities, that he may give the remainder to those, that want it ; that dares not to spend any money foolishly, because he considers it, as a talent from God, which must be used according to his will, praises God with something, that is more glorious, than songs of praise.

He, that has appointed times for the use of wise and pious prayers, performs a proper instance of devotion ; but he, that allows himself no times, nor any places, nor any actions, but such, as are strictly conformable to wisdom and holiness ; worships the divine nature with the most substantial devotion. For who does not know, that it is better to be pure and holy, than to talk about puri-

ty and holiness? Nay, who does not know, that a man is to be reckoned no farther pure, or holy, or just, than he is pure, and holy, and just in the common course of his life? But, if this be plain, then it is also plain, that it is better to be holy, than to have holy prayers.

Prayers therefore are so far from being a sufficient devotion, that they are the smallest part of it. We are to praise God with words and prayers, because it is a possible way of glorifying God, who has given us such faculties, as may be so used. But then, as words are but small things in themselves; as times of prayer are but little, if compared with the rest of our lives; so that devotion, which consists in times and forms of prayer, is but a very small thing; if compared to that devotion, which is to appear in every other part and circumstance of our lives.

Again; as it is an easy thing to worship God with forms of words, and to observe times of offering them unto him, so it is the smallest kind of piety.

On the other hand, as it is more difficult, to worship God with our substance, to honor him with the right use of our time, to offer to him the continual sacrifice of self denial and mortification; as it requires more piety to eat and drink only for such ends, as may glorify God, to undertake no labor, nor allow any diversion, but where we can act in the name of God; as it is most difficult, to sacrifice all our corrupt tempers, correct all our passions, and make piety to God the rule and measure of all the actions of all our common life; so the devotion of this kind is a much more acceptable service unto God, than those words of devotion, which we offer to him either in the church or in our closet.

Every sober reader will easily perceive that I don't intend to lessen the true value of prayer, either public or private; but only to show him, that they are certainly but a very slender part of devotion, when compared to a devout life.

To see this in a yet clearer light, let us suppose a person to have appointed times for praising God with

psalms and hymns, and to be strict in the observation of them ; let it be supposed also, that in his common life he is restless and uneasy, full of murmurings and complaints at every thing ; never pleased, but by chance, as his temper happens to carry him ; but murmuring and repining at the very seasons, and having something to dislike in every thing, that happens to him. Now can you conceive any thing more absurd and unreasonable, than such a character, as this ? is such a one to be reckoned thankful to God, because he has forms of praise, which he offers to him ? Nay, is it not certain, that such forms of praise must be so far from being an acceptable devotion to God, that they must be abhorred, as an abomination ? Now the absurdity, which you see in this instance, is the same in any other part of our life ; if our common life have any contrariety to our prayers, it is the same abomination, as songs of thanksgiving in the mouths of murmurers.

Bended knees, while you are clothed with pride ; heavenly petitions, while you are hoarding up treasures on earth ; holy devotions, while you live in the follies of the world ; prayers of meekness and charity, while your heart is the seat of spite and resentment ; hours of prayer, while you give up days and years to idle diversions, impertinent visits and foolish pleasures ; are as absurd, unacceptable service to God, as forms of thanksgiving from a person, that lives in repinings and discontent.

So that, unless the common course of our lives be according to the common spirit of our prayers ; our prayers are so far from being a real devotion, that they become an empty lip labor, or notorious hypocrisy.

Seeing, therefore, we are to make the spirit and temper of our prayers the common spirit and temper of our lives ; this may serve to convince us, that all orders of people are to labor after the utmost perfection of the Christian life. For, as all Christians are to use the same holy devotions ; as they are all with the same earnestness to pray for the Spirit of God ; so is it a sufficient proof,



that all orders of people are to the utmost of their power to make their life agreeable to that one Spirit, for which they are all to pray.

As certain, therefore, as the same holiness of prayer requires the same holiness of life ; so certain is it that all Christians are called to the same holiness of life.

A soldier or tradesman, is not called, to minister at the altar or preach the gospel ; but every soldier or tradesman is as much obliged to be devout, humble, holy, and heavenly minded in all parts of his common life, as a clergyman is obliged to be zealous, faithful, and laborious in all parts of his profession ; and all this, for one plain reason, because all people are to pray for the same holiness, wisdom, and divine temper, and to make themselves as fit, as they can, for the same heaven.

All men, therefore, as men, have one and the same important business ; to act up to the excellency of their rational nature, and to make reason the law of all their designs and actions. All Christians, as Christians, have one and the same calling, to live according to the excellency of the Christian spirit ; and to make the sublime precepts of the gospel the rule of their temper in common life. The one thing, needful to one, is the one thing, needful to all.

The merchant is no longer to hoard up treasures on earth ; the soldier is no longer to fight for glory ; the scholar is no longer to pride himself in the depths of science ; but they must all with one spirit *count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.*

The fine lady must teach her eyes to weep, and be clothed with humility. The polite gentleman must exchange the gay thoughts of wit and fancy, for a broken and a contrite heart. The man of quality must so far renounce the dignity of his birth, as to think himself miserable, till he is born again. Servants must consider their service, as done to God. Masters must consider

their servants, as their brethren in Christ ; that are to be treated, as fellow members of the body of Christ.

Young ladies must either devote themselves to piety, prayer, self denial, and all good works, in a virgin state of life ; or else marry, to be holy, sober, and prudent in the care of a family ; bringing up their children in piety, humility, and devotion, and abounding in all other good works, to the utmost of their capacity. They have no choice of any thing else, but must devote themselves to God in one of these states. They may choose a married or a single life ; but it is not left to their choice, whether they will make either state a state of holiness, humility, devotion, and all other duties of the Christian life. It is no more left in their power, because they are born of rich parents, to divide themselves between God and the world, or take such pleasures, as their fortunes would afford them ; than it is allowable for them, to be sometimes chaste, and sometimes not.

They are not to consider, how much religion may secure them a fair character, or how they may add devotion to an impertinent, vain, and giddy life ; but must look into the spirit and temper of their prayers ; into the nature and end of Christianity ; and then they will find, that, whether married or unmarried, they have but one business on their hands, to be wise and pious, and holy, not in little modes and forms of worship ; but in the whole turn of their minds, in the whole form of their behaviour, and in the daily course of their common life.

Young gentlemen must consider, what our blessed Saviour said to the young gentleman in the gospel ; he bid him *sell all, that he had, and give it to the poor*. Now, though this text should not oblige all people to sell all ; yet it certainly obliges all kind of people to employ their estates in such wise and charitable ways, as may show that all, they have, is devoted to God ; and that no part of it is kept from the poor, to be spent in vain, and foolish expenses.

If, therefore, young gentlemen propose to themselves a life of pleasure ; if they spend their estates in luxury

and intemperance, in state and equipage, in pleasure and diversions, in sports and gaming; they have as much reason to look upon themselves to be angels, as to be disciples of Christ. Let them be assured, that it is the one only business of a Christian gentleman, to distinguish himself by good works, to be eminent in the most sublime virtues of the gospel, to bear with the ignorance and weakness of the vulgar, to be a friend and patron to all, who dwell about him, to live in the utmost heights of wisdom and holiness, and show through the whole course of his life a true religious greatness of mind. They must aspire after such a gentility, as they might have learnt from seeing the blessed Jesus, and show no other spirit of a gentleman, but such, as they might have got by living with the holy apostles. They must learn to love God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength, and their neighbour, as themselves; and then they have all the greatness and distinction, they can have here, and are fit for eternal happiness in heaven hereafter.

Thus in all orders and conditions either of men or women, this is the one common holiness, which is to be the common life of all Christians.

The merchant is not to leave devotion to the clergyman, nor the clergyman to leave humility to the laborer; women of fortune are not to leave it to the poor of their sex, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, to adorn themselves in modest apparel, shamefacedness, and sobriety; nor poor women leave it to the rich, to attend on the worship and service of God. Great men must be eminent for true poverty of spirit, and people of a low state must greatly rejoice in God.

The man of strength and power is to forgive and pray for his enemies; and the innocent sufferer, that is chained in prison, must with Paul and Silas, at midnight sing praise to God. For God is to be glorified, holiness is to be practised, and the spirit of religion is to be the common spirit of every Christian in every state and condition of life.

For the Son of God did not come from above, to add

an external form of worship to the several ways of life, that are in the world; and so to leave people to live, as they did before, in such tempers and enjoyments, as the world approves. But as he came down from heaven, altogether divine and heavenly in his own nature; so it was, to call mankind to a divine and heavenly life; to the highest change of their whole nature and temper; to be born again of the Holy Spirit; to walk in the wisdom, and light, and love of God; and be like him to the utmost of their power; to renounce the most plausible ways of the world, whether of greatness, business, or pleasure; and to live in such wisdom, and purity, and holiness, as might fit them to be glorious in the enjoyment of God to all eternity.

Whatever, therefore, is foolish, ridiculous, vain or earthly, or sensual in the life of a Christian, is something that ought not to be there; it is a defilement, that must be washed away with tears of repentance. But, if any thing of this kind run through the course of our whole life; we renounce our profession.

For, as sure, as Jesus Christ was wisdom and holiness; as sure, as he came to make us like himself, and to be baptized into his spirit; so sure is it, that none can be said to keep their Christian profession; but they, who live a wise, and holy, and heavenly life. This and this alone is Christianity, a universal holiness in every part of life, a heavenly wisdom in all our actions; not conforming to the spirit of the world; but turning all worldly enjoyments into means of piety and devotion to God.

But, if this devout state of heart; if these habits of inward holiness be true religion; then true religion is equally the duty and happiness of all orders of men; for there is nothing, to recommend it to one, that is not the same recommendation of it to all states of people.

If it be the happiness and glory of a bishop, to live in this devout spirit, full of these holy tempers, doing every thing, as unto God; it is as much the glory and happiness of all men and women, whether young or old, to live in the same spirit. Whoever can find any reasons, why a

bishop should be intent upon divine things, turning all his life into the highest exercises of piety, wisdom and devotion ; will find them so many reasons, why he should do the same himself.

If you say, a bishop must be an eminent example of Christian holiness, because of his sacred calling ; you say right. But, if you say, it is more to his advantage to be exemplary, than it is yours ; you greatly mistake. For there is nothing to make the highest degrees of holiness desirable to a bishop ; but what makes them equally desirable to every young person of every family. For exalted piety, high devotion, and the religious use of every thing, is as much the glory and happiness of one state of life, as it is of another.

Do but fancy in your mind, what a spirit of piety you would have in the best bishop in the world ; how you would have him love God, imitate the life of our Saviour and his apostles ; how you would have him live above the world, shining in all the instances of a heavenly life ; and then you have found out that spirit, which you ought to make the spirit of your own life.

I desire every reader to dwell a while upon this reflection : and perhaps he will find more conviction from it, than he imagines. Every one can tell, how good and pious he would have some people to be ; every one knows, how wise and reasonable a thing it is in a bishop, to be entirely above the world, and be an example of Christian perfection ; as soon, as you think of a wise and ancient bishop, you fancy some exalted degree of piety, a living example of all those holy tempers, which you find described in the gospel.

Now, if you ask yourself, what is the happiest thing for a young clergyman to do ? You must be forced to answer, that nothing can be so happy and glorious for him, as to be like that excellent holy bishop.

If you ask, what is the happiest thing for any young gentleman or his sisters to do ? The answer must be the same ; nothing can be so happy or glorious for them, as to live in such habits of piety, in such exercises of a divine life, as this good old bishop does. For every

thing, that is great and glorious in religion, is as much the true glory of every man or woman, as it is the glory of any bishop. If high degrees of divine love, if fervent charity, if spotless purity, if heavenly affection, if constant mortification, if frequent devotion be the happiest way of life for any Christian; it is so for every Christian.

Consider again; if you see a bishop, living below his character, conforming to the foolish tempers of the world, and governed by the same cares and fears, which govern vain and worldly men; what do you think of him? You think that he is only guilty of a small mistake? No; you condemn him, as erring in that, which is not only the most, but the only important matter, that relates to him. Stay a while in this consideration, till your mind is fully convinced, how miserable a mistake it is in a bishop, to live a careless, worldly life.

While you are thinking in this manner, turn your thoughts toward some of your acquaintance, your brother or sister. Now, if you see the common course of their lives to be not according to the doctrines of the gospel; if you see that their way of life cannot be said to be a sincere endeavour to enter in at the strait gate; you see something, that you are to condemn in the same degree, and for the same reasons. They do not commit a small mistake; but are wrong in that, which is their all; and mistake their true happiness as much, as that bishop does, who neglects the high duties of his calling. Apply this reasoning to yourself; if you find yourself living an idle, vain life, choosing rather to gratify your passions than to live up to the doctrines of Christianity, and practise the plain precepts of our blessed Lord; you have all that blindness and unreasonableness to charge upon yourself, that you can charge upon a regular bishop. For all the virtues of the Christian life, its perfect purity, its heavenly tempers, are as much the sole rule of your life, as the sole rule of the life of a bishop. If you neglect these holy tempers; if you do not eagerly aspire after them; if you do not show yourself a visible example of them; you are as much fallen from your

true happiness ; you are as great an enemy to yourself, and have made as bad a choice, as that bishop, who chooses rather to enrich his family, than to be like an apostle. For there is no reason, why you should think the highest holiness, the most heavenly temper, to be the duty and happiness of a bishop ; but what is as good a reason, why you should think the same temper to be the duty and happiness of all Christians ; and as the wisest bishop in the world is he, who lives in the greatest height of holiness ; who is most exemplary in all the exercises of a divine life ; so the wisest youth, the wisest woman, whether married or unmarried, is she, that lives in the highest degree of Christian holiness, and all the exercises of a divine and heavenly life.

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## CHAP. XI.

*Showing how great devotion fills our lives with the greatest peace and happiness.*

SOME people will perhaps object, that these rules of holy living to God in all we do, are too great a restraint on human life ; and that, by depriving ourselves of so many seemingly innocent pleasures, we shall render our lives dull, and melancholy.

To which it may be answered ;

First, That these rules will procure a quite contrary end ; that they will render them full of content and satisfaction.

Secondly, That the more we find out God in every thing, the more we look up to him in all our actions, the more we conform to his will, the more we act according to his wisdom, and imitate his goodness ; by so much the more do we enjoy God, and heighten and increase all that is happy and comfortable in human life

Thirdly, He, that is endeavouring to subdue his pride, envy, and ambition, is doing more, to make himself happy, even in this life, than he, that is contriving means to indulge them.

For these passions are the cause of all the vexations of life ; they are the dropsies and fevers of our mind, vexing them with false appetites, and restless cravings after such things, as we do not want, and spoiling our taste for those things, which are our proper good.

Do but imagine that you saw a man, that proposed reason, as the rule of his actions ; that had no desires, but after such things, as nature wants, and religion approves ; that was as pure from all motions of pride, envy, and covetousness, as from thoughts of murder ; that in this freedom from worldly passions, he had a soul full of divine love, wishing and praying, that all men may have, what they want of worldly things, and be partakers of eternal glory in the life to come ; and your conscience will immediately tell you, that he is the happiest man in the world.

On the other hand, if you suppose him to be in any degree less perfect ; if you suppose him subject to one vain passion ; your conscience will tell you, that he so far lessens his happiness, and robs himself of the true enjoyment of his other virtues. So true is it, that the more we live by the rules of religion, the more peaceful and happy do we render our lives.

As it thus appears, that real happiness is to be had only from the greatest degrees of piety, and the strictest rules of religion ; so the same truth will appear from a consideration of human misery. If we look into the world, and view the troubles of human life, we shall find that they are all owing to our irreligious passions.

Now all trouble is founded in the want of something ; would we therefore know the true cause of our troubles ; we must find out the cause of our wants ; because that, which creates our wants, does in the same degree create our trouble.



God has sent us into the world with very few wants ; meat, and drink, and clothing, are the only things, necessary in life ; and, as these are only our present needs, so the present world is well furnished, to supply these needs.

If a man have half the world in his power ; he can make no more of it than this ; as he wants it only to support animal life ; so it is unable to do any thing else for him, or to afford him any other happiness.

This is the state of man, born with few wants, and into a large world, capable of supplying them. So that one would reasonably suppose, that men should pass their lives in content and thankfulness to God ; at least that they should be free from violent vexations, as being placed in a world, that has more, than enough, to relieve all their wants.

But, if to all this we add, that this short life, thus furnished with all, that we want in it, is only a short passage to eternal glory, where we shall be clothed with the brightness of angels, and enter into the joys of God ; we might still more reasonably expect, that human life should be a state of peace, and joy, and delight in God. Thus it would certainly be, if reason had its full power over us.

But alas, though God, and nature, and reason, make human life thus free from wants, and so full of happiness ; yet our passions, in rebellion against God, and reason, create a new world of evils, and fill human life with imaginary wants.

The man of pride has a thousand wants, which his own pride has created ; and these render him as full of trouble, as if God had created him with a thousand appetites, without creating any thing, proper to satisfy them. Envy and ambition have also their endless wants, which disquiet the souls of men, and by their contradictory motions, render them as miserable, as those that wish to fly and creep at the same time.

Let any complaining, disquieted man tell you the ground of his uneasiness, and you will plainly see, that he is the author of his own torment ; that he is vexing

himself at some imaginary evil, which will cease to torment him, as soon as he is content to be that which God, and reason require him to be.

If you should see a man, passing his days in disquiet, because he could not walk upon the water, or catch birds, as they fly by him ; you would readily confess, that such a one might thank himself for such uneasiness. But, if you look into the most tormenting disquiets of life, you will find them all thus absurd ; where people are only tormented by their own folly.

What can you conceive more silly, than to suppose a man racking his brains, and studying night and day, how to fly ? Wandering from house and home, wearying himself with climbing up every ascent, courting every body he meets, to lift him up from the ground, bruising himself with falls, and at last breaking his neck ? And all this, from an imagination, that it would be glorious, to have the eyes of people gazing up at him, and mighty happy to eat, and drink, and sleep, at the top of the highest tree in the kingdom. Would you not readily own, that such an one was disquieted by his own folly ?

If you ask, what it signifies to suppose such silly creatures, as are no where to be found in human life ; it may be answered ; wherever you see an ambitious man, there you see this vain and senseless flyer.

If you should see a man, that had a large pond of water, yet living in continual thirst, not suffering himself to drink half a draught, for fear of lessening his pond ; if you should see him wasting his time and strength, in fetching more water to his pond, always thirsty, yet always carrying a bucket of water in his hand, watching early and late, to catch the drops of rain, gaping after every cloud, and running greedily into every mire and mud, in hopes of water, and always studying, how to make every ditch empty itself into his pond. If you should see him grow grey and old in these anxious labors, and at last end a careful, thirsty life, by falling into his own pond ; would you not say that such an one was not only the author of all his own disquiets, but was foolish enough to be reckoned among ideots and mad-

men? But yet foolish and absurd, as this character is, it does not represent half the follies, and disquiets of the covetous man.

I could now easily proceed to show the same effects of all our other passions; and make it plainly appear, that all our miseries, vexations, and complaints, are entirely of our own making; and that in the same absurd manner, as in these instances of the covetous and ambitious man. Look where you will, you will see all worldly vexations, like the vexation of him, that was always in mire and mud in search of water to drink, when he had more at home, than was sufficient for a hundred horses.

Cælia is always telling you, how provoked she is, what monstrous usage she suffers, and what vexations, she meets every where. She tells you that her patience is quite worn out, and there is no bearing the behaviour of people. Every assembly, that she is at, sends her home provoked; something or other has been said or done, that no reasonable, well bred person ought to bear. Poor people, that want her charity, are sent away with hasty answers; not because she has not a heart to part with any money, but because she is too full of some trouble of her own, to attend to the complaints of others. Cælia has no business on her hands, but to receive the income of a plentiful fortune; yet by the doleful turn of her mind, you would be apt to think, that she had neither food nor lodging. If you see her look more pale, than ordinary; if her lips tremble, when she speaks to you; it is because she has just come from a visit, where Lupus took no notice at all of her, but talked all the time to Lucinda, who has not half her fortune. When cross accidents have so disordered her spirits, that she is forced to send for the doctor, to make her able to eat; she tells him in great anger at Providence, that she never was well, since she was born; and that she envies every beggar, that she sees in health. This is the disquiet of Cælia, who has nothing to torment her, but her own spirit.

If you would inspire her with Christian humility;

you need do no more, to make her as happy, as any person in the world. This virtue would make her thankful to God for half so much health, as she has had; and help her to enjoy more for the time to come. This virtue would keep off tremblings of the spirits, and loss of appetite, and her blood would need nothing else to sweeten it.

I have touched on these absurd characters, to convince you in the plainest manner, that the strictest rules of religion are so far from rendering a life dull, anxious, and uncomfortable, that, on the contrary, all the miseries, vexations, and complaints in the world, are owing to the want of religion; being directly caused by those absurd passions, which religion teaches us to deny.

So far, therefore, as you reduce your desires to such things, as nature and reason require; so far as you regulate all the motions of your heart by the strict rules of religion; so far you remove yourself from that infinity of wants and vexations, which torment every heart, that is left to itself.

Most people indeed; confess, that religion preserves us from a great many evils, and helps us in many respects to a more happy enjoyment of ourselves; but then they imagine, that this is only true of such a moderate share of religion, as only gently restrains us from the excesses of our passions. They suppose that the strict rules and restraints of an exalted piety are such contradictions to our nature, as must make our lives dull and uncomfortable.

This objection supposes, that religion, moderately practised, adds much to the happiness of life; but that such height of piety, as the perfection of religion requires, has a contrary effect.

It supposes therefore, that it is happy to be kept from excess of envy, but unhappy to be kept from other degrees of envy; that it is happy to be delivered from a boundless ambition, but unhappy to be without a moderate ambition. It supposes also, that the happiness of life consists in a mixture of ambition, and humility, charity and envy, heavenly affection and covetousness.—All

which is as absurd, as to suppose that it is happy to be free from excessive pains ; but unhappy to be without moderate pains ; or that the happiness of health consisted in being partly sick, and partly well.

For, if humility be the peace and rest of the soul ; then no one has so much happiness, as he, that is most humble. If excessive envy is a torment of the soul ; he most perfectly delivers himself from torment that most perfectly extinguishes every spark of envy. If there is joy in doing any action according to the will of God ; he that brings the most of his actions to this rule, does most of all increase the joy of his life. Thus it is in every virtue ; if you act up to every degree of it ; the more happiness you have from it. So of every vice ; if you only abate its excesses, you do but little for yourself ; but, if you reject it in all degrees, then you feel the joy of a reformed mind. If religion only restrain the excesses of revenge ; your religion may have made your life a little more outwardly decent, but not have made you at all happier in yourself. But, if you have once sacrificed all thoughts of revenge, in obedience to God, and are resolved to return good for evil at all times, that you may render yourself more like God, and fitter for his mercy in the kingdom of love and glory ; this is a height of virtue, that will make you feel its happiness.

*Secondly,* As to those enjoyments, which an exalted piety requires us to deny ourselves, this deprives us of no real comfort.

For Piety requires to renounce no way of life, where we can act reasonably. No enjoyments, within the bounds of reason, are denied us by the strictest rules of piety. Whatever you can do, or enjoy, in the presence of God, as his rational creature ; all, that you can perform conformably to rational nature, and the will of God is allowed by the laws of piety ; and will you think that your life will be uncomfortable, unless you may displease God and act contrary to that reason which he has implanted in you ?

As for those satisfactions, which we dare not offer to

a holy God ; which inflame our passions, and sink our souls in sensuality, and render us incapable of the divine favor ; surely it can be no uncomfortable state of life, to be rescued by religion from such self-murder, and rendered capable of eternal happiness.

Let us suppose a person, destitute of that knowledge, which we have from our senses, placed alone by himself, in the midst of a variety of things, which he did not know ; how to use ; that he has by him bread, wine, water, gold dust, iron chains, gravel, garments, fire, &c. Let it be supposed, that he has no knowledge of the right use of these things, nor how to quench his thirst or satisfy his hunger. Let it be supposed, that in his drought he puts gold dust into his eyes ; when his eyes smart, he puts wine into his ears ; that in his hunger, he puts gravel in his mouth ; that in pain, he loads himself with the iron chains ; that, feeling cold, he puts his feet in the water ; that, being frightened at the fire, he runs from it. Let it be supposed, that through ignorance of the right use of the things about him, he torments himself, while he lives ; and at last dies blinded with dust, choked with gravel, and loaded with irons. Let it be supposed, that some good being came, and showed him the nature of the things about him, and gave him such rules of using them, as would certainly, if observed, deliver him from the pains of hunger, and thirst, and cold, and make him happy ; could you with any reason affirm, that those strict rules of using the things about him, had rendered that man's life dull and uncomfortable ?

Now this is in some measure a representation of the strict rules of religion ; they only relieve our ignorance, save us from tormenting ourselves, and teach us to use every thing about us to our advantage.

Man is placed in a world, full of variety of things ; his ignorance makes him use many of them as absurdly as the man that put dust in his eyes, to relieve his thirst.

Religion, therefore, here comes in to his relief, and gives him strict rules of using every thing about him ; that by so using them, suitably to his own nature, he may have always the pleasure of receiving benefit from them.

It shows him, what is strictly right in meat, drink, and clothes ; and that he has nothing to expect from the things of this world, but to satisfy such wants of his own ; and then to extend his assistance to his brethren as far, as he is able.

It tells him, that all endeavours, to be happy in heaps of money, or acres of land, in fine clothes, rich beds, stately equipage, and splendor, are vain, ignorant attempts after impossibilities ; these things being no more able to give the least degree of happiness, than dust in the eyes can cure thirst, or gravel in the mouth satisfy hunger ; but, like dust and gravel misapplied, will only serve to render him more unhappy by such an ignorant misuse of them.

It tells him, that, although this world can do no more for him, than satisfy these wants of the body ; yet that there is a much greater good, prepared for man, than eating, drinking, and dressing ; that it is yet invisible ; but reserved for him to enter upon as soon, as this short life is over ; where in a new body, formed to angelic likeness, he shall dwell in light and glory to all eternity.

It tells him, that this state of glory will be given to all those, that make a right use of the things of this world ; who do not blind themselves with golden dust, or eat gravel ; but use bread, wine, and garments, for such ends, as accord to nature and reason ; and with faith and thankfulness worship the kind giver of all, they enjoy here, and hope for hereafter.

Can any one say, that the strictest rules of such a religion, debar us any of the comforts of life ? Might it not as justly be said of those rules, that hindered a man from choking himself with gravel ? For the strictness of these rules consists only in the exactness of their rectitude.

Who could complain of the strictness of a law, that without any exception forbade the putting of dust into our eyes ? Now this is the strictness of religion ; it requires nothing of us, but where every degree of the thing is wrong, where every indulgence does us some hurt.

If religion forbids all instances of revenge without exception ; it is, because all revenge is of the nature of poison ; and, though we do not take so much, as to put an end to life ; y<sup>e</sup>t, if we take any, it corrupts the whole mass of blood.

If religion commands universal charity ; to love our neighbour, as ourselves ; to forgive and pray for our enemies without any reserve ; it is, because all degrees of love are degrees of happiness, that support the divine life of the soul, and are as necessary to its health and happiness, as proper food is to the health of the body.

If religion commands us to be content with food and raiment ; it is, because every other use of the world is abusing it to our own vexation, and turning its conveniences into snares to destroy us. It is, because this simplicity of life, secures us from the cares of restless pride and envy, and makes it easier to keep the strait road to eternal life.

If religion saith, *Sell that, thou hast ; and give to the poor* ; it is because there is no other reasonable use of riches ; no other way of making ourselves happier for them ; it is, because it is as strictly right, to give others that, which we do not want ourselves ; as it is, to use so much, as our own wants require. For, if a man has more food, than his own nature requires ; how unreasonable is it to invent foolish ways of wasting it rather, than let his fellow creatures have the same comfort from it he hath had ? It is so far therefore from being a hard law of religion, to make this use of riches, that a reasonable man would rejoice in that religion, which teaches him to be happier in that, which he gives away, than in that, which he keeps for himself.

If religion calleth us to a life of prayer ; it is, because we live among enemies, and always need the assistance of God. If we are to confess our sins ; it is, because such confessions relieve the mind, and restore it to ease. If we are to be frequent and fervent in holy petitions ; it is to keep us steady in the sight of our true good, and



that we may never want the happiness of a lively faith, and well grounded trust in God.

Were there any exercise of the mind, or any conversation with men, that turned more to our advantage, than this intercourse with God ; we should not be called to such a continuance in prayer. But, if a man consider, what he leaves, when he retires to devotion ; he will find it no small happiness, to be often relieved from doing nothing ; from unprofitable labor, or vain conversation ; he will have reason to rejoice at those hours of prayer, which carry him to higher consolations, which open to his mind a scene of greater things, and accustom his soul to the expectation of them.

If religion commands us, to live wholly unto God ; it is, because every other way is living against ourselves, and will end in our own shame and confusion.

Would you see, how happy they are, who live according to their own will ? Look at the man in the parable, to whom his lord had given one talent. He could not bear the thought of using his talent according to the will of him, from whom he had it ; and therefore he chose to make himself happier in a way of his own. *Lord, says he, I knew thee, that thou art a hard man ; reaping, where thou hast not sown ; and gathering, where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid, and went, and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, there thou hast that is thine.* Matt. xxv. 24.

His lord, having convicted him out of his own mouth, dispatches him with this sentence ; *Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Matt. xxv. 30.

This is the happiness of those, who look upon a strict and exalted piety, a dull and melancholy state of life.

They may live a while free from the restraints and directions of religion ; but, instead thereof, they must be under the government of their passions : they must, like the man in the parable, live in murmuring and discontent, in fear and apprehension. They may avoid the labor of doing good, of laying up treasure in heaven, of clothing the naked, of visiting the sick ; but they

must, like this man, have labors, that tend to no advantage, that do no good to themselves or others; they must travail, and labor, and dig, to hide their talent in the earth. They must, like him, be convicted out of their own mouths; be accused by their own hearts, and be made to show the justice of their condemnation to eternal darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is the purchase that they make, who avoid the strictness and perfection of religion, in order to live happily.

On the other hand, would you see a short description of the happiness of a life, rightly employed, wholly devoted to God; you must look at the man in the parable, to whom his Lord had given five talents. *Lord, says he, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

Here you see that a life, wholly intent on the improvement of the talents; that is devoted wholly to God; is a state of happiness. The man is not toiling, and digging for no end; but his pious labors prosper in his hands; his happiness increases on him; the blessing of five becomes the blessing of ten talents; and he is thus received; *Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

All that we have, all that we are, all that we enjoy, are only so many talents from God: if we use them to the ends of a pious and holy life; our five talents will become ten, and our labors will carry us into the joy of our Lord; but if we abuse them to the gratification of our own passions; sacrificing the gifts of God to our pride and vanity, we shall live here in vain labors and anxieties; shunning religion, as a melancholy thing; accusing our Lord, as a hard master; and then fall into everlasting misery.

We may for awhile amuse ourselves with names, and sounds, and shadows of happiness; we may talk of this, or that greatness, and dignity; but, if we desire real

happiness ; we have no other possible way to it, but by improving our talents, by so using the powers and faculties of men in this present state, that we may be happy and glorious in the powers and faculties of angels in the world to come.

How ignorant therefore are they of the nature of religion, of the nature of man, and the nature of God ; who think a life of strict piety and devotion to God, to be a dull and uncomfortable state ; when it is certain, that there is no comfort in any thing else ?

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## CHAP. XII.

*The happiness of a life, wholly devoted to God, farther proved, from the vanity, sensuality, and poor enjoyments of those who live according to their own humor, represented in various characters.*

WE may still see more of the happiness of a life, devoted to God, by considering the poor contrivances which they adopt, who seek happiness by other methods.

If one look at their lives, who live by no rule, but their own fancies ; if one see what they call happiness ; how they rejoice and repent, change and fly from one delusion to another ; we shall find great reason to rejoice, that God has appointed a strait and narrow way, that leadeth to life, and that we are not forced to take up with such shadows of happiness, as the folly of the world has invented.

For instance, when a man proposes to be happy by raising himself to some imaginary height above other people ; this is truly an invention of happiness, which has no foundation in nature ; but is as mere a cheat of

our own making, as if a man should intend to make himself happy by climbing up a ladder.

If a woman seek happiness from fine colors or spots on her face, from jewels and rich clothes; this is an invention of happiness, as contrary to reason, as if she should propose to make herself happy, by painting a post, and putting the same finery upon it.

On these inventions of happiness, I desire you to cast your eye, that you may thence learn, how great a good religion is; which delivers you from such a multitude of follies and vain pursuits.

Look at Flatus, and learn how miserable they are, who are left to the folly of their own passions. Flatus is rich and in health; yet always uneasy, always searching after happiness. Every time, you visit him, you find some new project in his head; he is eager upon it, as something, that will do more for him, than any thing, that is already past. His sanguine temper and strong passion promise him so much happiness in every thing, that he is always cheated, and is satisfied with nothing.

At his first setting out in life, fine clothes were his delight; his inquiry was only after the best tailors and peruke makers, and he had no thought of excelling in any thing but dress. He spared no expense, but carried every nicety to its greatest height. But, this course not answering his expectation, he left off his brocades, put on a plain coat, railed at fops and beaux, and gave himself up to gaming with great eagerness.

This new pleasure satisfied him for some time. But, being by the fate of play drawn into a duel, where he narrowly escaped death, he left off dice, and sought happiness no longer among gamesters.

The next thing that seized his imagination, was the diversions of the town; and for more than a twelve-month, you heard him talk of nothing, but ladies, drawing rooms, birth nights, plays, balls, and assemblies. But, growing sick of these, he had recourse to hard drinking. Here he had many a merry night, and stronger joys, than he had felt before. Here he had thoughts of setting up his staff, and looking out no farther; but,

unluckily falling into a fever, he grew angry at strong liquors, and took his leave of the happiness of being drunk.

The next attempt after happiness carried him into the field ; for two or three years nothing was so happy, as hunting ; he entered on it with all his soul, and leaped more hedges and ditches, than had ever been known in so short a time. You never saw him, but in a green coat ; he was the envy of all, who blew the horn, and always spoke to his dogs with great propriety of language. If you met him at home in a bad day, you would hear him blow his horn, and be entertained with the surprising accidents of the last noble chase. No sooner had Flatus outdone all the world in the breed and education of his dogs, built new kennels, new stables, and bought a new hunting seat ; but he immediately got sight of another happiness, hated the senseless noise and hurry of hunting, gave away his dogs, and was for some time after deep in the pleasures of building.

Now he invents a new kind of dove cotes, and has such contrivances in his barns and stables, as were never seen before ; he wonders at the dullness of the old builders, is wholly bent on the improvement of architecture, and will hardly hang a door in the ordinary way. He tells his friends, that he never was so delighted in any thing in his life ; that he has more happiness among his brick and mortar, than ever he had at court.

The next year he leaves his house unfinished, complains to every body of masons and carpenters, and devotes himself wholly to the happiness of riding about.

After this you never see him, but on horse back, and so delighted with this new way of life, that he would tell you, give him but his horse and a clean country to ride in, and you might take all the rest to yourself. A variety of new saddles and bridles, and a great change of horses, added much to the pleasure of this new way of life. But however, having after some time tired himself and his horses, the happiest thing, he could think

of next, was to go abroad, and visit foreign countries ; and indeed this happiness exceeded his imagination, and he was only uneasy, that he had begun so fine a life no sooner. The next month he returned home, unable to bear any longer the impertinence of foreigners.

After this he was a great student one whole year ; he was up early and late at his Italian grammar, that he might have the happiness of understanding the opera, whenever he should hear one ; and not be like those unreasonable people, that are pleased with they don't know what.

Flatus is very ill natured, or otherwise, just as his affairs happen to be, when you visit him ; if you find him, when some project is almost worn out, you will find a peevish, ill bred man ; but, if you had seen him just, as he entered upon his riding regimen, or begun to excel in sounding the horn ; you had been saluted with great civility.

Flatus is now at a full stand, and is doing, what he never did before ; he is reasoning, and reflecting with himself ; and loses several days in considering, which of his cast off ways of life he shall try again.

But here a new project comes in to his relief. He is now living upon herbs, and running about the country, to get himself into as good wind, as any running foot-man in the kingdom.

I have been thus circumstantial, because I hope that every particular folly, you see here, will turn itself into an argument for the wisdom and happiness of a religious life.

If I could lay before you a particular account of all the circumstances of terror and distress, that daily attend a life at sea ; the more particular I was in the account, the more I should make you rejoice in the happiness of living upon the land.

In like manner, the more I enumerate the follies, anxieties, and restless desires, which go through every part of a life, devoted to worldly enjoyments ; the more you must be affected with that peace, and solid content, which religion gives to the souls of men.

If you had but just cast your eye upon a madman, or a fool ; it would perhaps signify little or nothing to you ; but if you were to attend them some days and observe the lamentable madness and stupidity of all their actions ; this would be an affecting sight, and would make you often bless yourself for the enjoyment of your reason and sense.

Just so, if you are only told, in the gross, of the folly and madness of a life, devoted to the world ; it makes little or no impression upon you ; but, if you are shown, how such people live every day ; if you see the continual folly and madness of their actions, this would be an affecting sight, and make you bless God, for having given you a greater happiness, to aspire after.

As in several cases we best learn the nature of things, by looking at that, which is contrary to them ; so perhaps we best apprehend the excellency of wisdom, by contemplating the extravagances of folly.

You will perhaps say, the ridiculous life of Flatus is not the common state of those, who resign themselves to live by their own humor, and neglect the strict rules of religion.

I answer, I am afraid it is one of the most general characters in life ; and that few people can read it, without seeing something in it, that belongs to themselves. For where shall we find that wise and happy man, who has not been eagerly pursuing different appearances of happiness, sometimes thinking it was here, and sometimes there ?

If people were to divide their lives into particular stages, and ask themselves, what it was which they had chiefly in view, when they were twenty years old, what at twenty five, what at thirty, what at forty, what at fifty, and so on, till brought to their last bed ; numbers would find, that they had liked and disliked, and pursued as many different appearances of happiness, as are seen in the life of Flatus ; and thus it must necessarily be more or less with all, who propose any other happiness, than that, which arises from strict and regular piety.

Secondly, let it be granted, that the generality of

people, are not such restless, fickle tempers, as Flatus ; the difference then, is only this, Flatus is continually changing and trying something new ; but others are content with some one state ; they do not leave gaming, and then fall to hunting. But they have so much steadiness in their temper, that some seek after no other happiness, but that of heaping up riches ; others grow old in the sports of the field ; others are content to drink themselves to death ; without the least inquiry after any other happiness.

Now is there any thing more reasonable, in such a life, than the life of Flatus ? Is it not as wise and happy, to be constantly changing from one thing to another, as to be nothing else, but a gatherer of money, a hunter, a gamester, or a drunkard, all your life ?

Shall religion be looked upon as a burden, as a melancholy state, for calling men from such happiness, as this, to live according to the laws of God, to labor after the perfection of their nature, and prepare themselves for an endless state of joy and glory in the presence of God ?

But turn your eyes now another way ; and let the trifling joys, the gewgaw happiness of Feliciana, teach you, how wise they are whose hearts and hopes are fixed upon a happiness in God.

If you were to live with Feliciana one half year ; you would see all the happiness, she is to have as long, as she lives.

She is again to be dressed fine ; and keep her visiting day. She is again to change the color of her clothes, again to have a new head dress, and again put patches on her face. She is again to see who acts best at the play house, and who sings finest at the opera. She is again to make ten visits in a day, and be ten times in a day trying to talk artfully, easily, and politely about nothing.

She is to be again delighted with some new fashion ; and again angry at the change of some old one. She is to be again at cards, and gaming at midnight, and again in bed at noon. She is to be again pleased with hypo-



critical compliments, and again disturbed with imaginary affronts. She is to be again pleased with her good luck at gaming, and again tormented with the loss of her money. She is again to prepare herself for a birth night, and again see the town full of good company. She is again to hear the cabals and intrigues of the town, again to have secret intelligence of private amours, and early notice of marriages, quarrels, and partings.

If you see her come out of her chariot more briskly, than usual ; converse with more spirit, and seem fuller of joy, than she was last week ; it is, because there is some surprising new dress, or new diversion, just come to town.

These are all the substantial and regular parts of Felician's happiness ; and she never knew a pleasant day in her life, but it was owing to some one, or more of these things.

It is for this happiness, that she has always been deaf to the reasonings of religion, and to the sound of such dull words, as wisdom, piety, and devotion.

For fear of losing some of this happiness, she dares not meditate on the immortality of her soul, consider her relation to God, or turn her thoughts toward those joys, which make saints and angels happy in the presence of God.

If you observe the lives of those women, whom no arguments can persuade to live wholly to God, in a wise and pious employment of themselves ; you will find most of them to be such, as lose the comforts of religion, without gaining a tenth part of Felician's happiness. They are such, as spend their time and fortune in mimicking the pleasures of richer people ; and rather long after, than enjoy those delusions, which are to be purchased by considerable fortunes.

But, if a woman of high birth and fortune, having read the gospel, wish to be an under servant in some pious family, where wisdom, piety, and devotion, direct the actions of every day ; if she rather wish this, than Felician's happiness ; I think her neither mad, nor melancholy ; but that she has judged as rightly of the spir-

it of the Gospel, as if she had rather wished to be poor *Lazarus at the gate*, than to be the rich man, *clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day.*

Would you know, what a happiness it is, to be governed by the wisdom of religion; look at the poor condition of Succus, whose greatest happiness is a good night's rest in bed, and a good meal, when he is up.

This regard to his meals and repose makes Succus order all his time with relation to them. He will undertake no business, that may break in upon his hours of eating and rest. If he read, it is only for half an hour, because that is sufficient to amuse the spirits; and he will read something, that may make him laugh, as rendering the body fitter for its food and rest. He talks coolly on all subjects, and is as fearful of falling into a passion, as of catching cold; being positive, that they are both equally injurious to the stomach. If you ever see him warmer, than ordinary, it is, when the dispute about cookery runs high, or in defence of some beloved dish, which has often made him happy.

Succus is very loyal, and as soon, as he likes any wine, he drinks the king's health with all his heart.—Nothing could put rebellious thoughts into his head, unless he should live to see a proclamation against eating pheasant's eggs.

All the hours, not devoted to repose or nourishment, are looked on by Succus, as waste time. For this reason he lodges near a coffee house and a tavern; that when he rises in the morning, he may hear the news, and when he parts at night, he may not have far to bed.

On Sunday night you may sometimes hear him condemning the iniquity of the town rakes; and the bitterest thing, he says against them, is this, that he verily believes some of them are so abandoned, as not to have a regular meal, or a sound night's sleep in a week.

At eleven, Succus bids all good night, and parts in great friendship. He is presently in bed, and sleeps till it is time to go to the coffee house next morning.

If you was to live with Succus a twelvemonth; this

is all, you would see in his life, except a few curses and oaths, that he uses, as occasion offers.

Now I cannot help making this reflection, that, as I believe the most likely mean to inspire a person with true piety is, to have seen the example of some eminent professor of religion ; so the next thing, that is likely to fill one with the same zeal, is to see the folly, the baseness, the poor satisfaction of a life, destitute of religion. As the one exercises us to love and admire the wisdom of religion, so the other may make us fearful of living without it.

For who can help blessing God for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory, when he sees what variety of folly they sink into, who live without it ? Who would not heartily engage in the labors and exercises of a pious life, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; when he sees, what poor views, what gross enjoyments, they are left to, who seek happiness in other ways.

Consider now with yourself, how unreasonably it is pretended, that a life of strict piety must be a dull and anxious state ? For can it with any reason be said, that the duties and restraints of religion must render our lives melancholy ; when they only deprive us of such happiness, as has been here laid before you ?

Must it be tiresome, to live in the continual exercise of charity, devotion and temperance ; to act wisely and virtuously ; to do good to the utmost of your power ; to imitate the divine perfections, and prepare yourself for the enjoyment of God ? Must it be tiresome, to be delivered from blindness and vanity, from false hopes and vain fears, to improve in holiness, to feel the comforts of conscience in all your actions, to know that God is your friend, that all must work for your good ; that neither life nor death, neither men, nor devils can do you any harm ; but that all your sufferings, watchings, prayers, and labors of love and charity, are in a short time to be rewarded with everlasting glory in the presence of God ; must such a state be tiresome for want of such happiness, as Flatus, or Feliciano enjoys ?

If this cannot be said ; then there is no happiness lost, by being strictly pious ; nor has the devout man any thing to envy in any other state of life. For all the art and contrivance in the world, without religion, cannot make more of human life, or carry its happiness to a greater height, than Flatus or Felicianus has done.

The greatest genius on earth, if not governed by religion, must be as foolish, in his methods of happiness, as poor Succus.

If you saw a man, endeavouring all his life to satisfy his thirst, by holding up the same empty cup to his mouth ; you would certainly despise his ignorance.

But, if you should see others, ridiculing the dull satisfaction of one cup ; and thinking to satisfy their thirst by a variety of golden empty cups ; would you think that these were wiser or better employed ? Now this is all the difference, you can see in the happiness of this life.

The dull and heavy soul may be content with one empty appearance of happiness, and be continually trying to hold the same empty cup to his mouth all his life. But, the great scholar, the fine genius, the great statesman, the polite gentleman, lay all their heads together ; and they can only show you more and various, empty appearances of happiness ; let them cut and carve, as they please, they only make a variety of empty cups. So that, if you do not think it hard, to be deprived of the pleasures of gluttony for the sake of religion ; you have no reason to think it hard, to be restrained from any other worldly pleasure. For search as deep, and look as far, as you will ; there is nothing here, that is nobler, than high eating and drinking ; unless you look for it in the wisdom and laws of religion.

If you would use yourself to reflect upon the vanity of all orders of life without piety ; to consider the ways of the world, as so many different ways of blindness ; you would soon find your heart made wiser and better by it. These meditations would awaken a zealous desire of that solid happiness, which is to be found in recourse to God.

Examples of great piety are not common in the world ;

it may not be your happiness to live within sight of any, or to have your virtue inflamed by their light and fervor. But the folly of worldly men meets your eye in every place ; you need not look far, to see, how vainly men dream away their lives for want of religious wisdom.

This is the reason, that I have laid before you so many characters of the vanity of a worldly life, that you may be made wise, though not by the sight of what piety is, yet by seeing what misery and folly reign, where piety is not.

If you would turn your mind to such reflections, your own observation would carry this instruction much farther ; and all your acquaintance with the world would be a daily conviction to you, of the necessity of seeking some greater happiness, than this world can give.

To meditate on the perfection of the divine attributes, to contemplate the glories of heaven, to consider the joys of saints and angels, living for ever in the brightness and glory of the divine presence ; these are the meditations of souls, advanced in piety, and not so suited to every capacity.

But to consider the emptiness of all worldly happiness ; to see the grossness of sensuality, the stupidity of covetousness, the vanity of dress, the delusion of honor, the blindness of our passions, the uncertainty of our lives, and the shortness of all worldly projects ; these are meditations, that are suited to all capacities, fitted to strike all minds ; are forced upon us by all our senses, and taught us by every thing we see and hear.

This is that *wisdom, that crieth, and putteth forth her voice in the streets ; that standeth at our doors, that appealeth to our senses, teaching us in every thing and every where, by all we see, and all we hear, by births and burials, by sickness and health, by life and death, by pains and poverty, by misery and vanity, by all the changes and chances of life ; that there is nothing else for man to look after ; no other end in nature for him to aim at, but a happiness, which is to be found in the hopes and expectations of religion.*

## CHAP. XIII.

*That not only a life of vanity, or sensuality, but even the most regular kind of life, that is not governed by great devotion, shows its miseries, its wants and emptiness; represented in various characters.*

It is a very remarkable saying of our Lord to his disciples ; *Blessed are your eyes, for they see ; and your ears, for they hear.* They teach us two things ; first that the dullness and heaviness of men's minds, with regard to spiritual matters, is so great, that it may justly be compared to the want of eyes and ears.

Secondly, that God has so filled every thing and every place with motives and arguments for a godly life ; that they, who are so happy, as to use their eyes and ears, must be affected with them.

Now though this was in a more especial manner the case of those, whose senses were witnesses of the life, and miracles, and doctrines of our blessed Lord ; yet it is as truly the case of all Christians at this time. For the reasons of religion, the calls to piety, are so engraved upon every thing, and present themselves so strongly and constantly to all our senses in every thing, we meet ; that they can be disregarded only, by eyes, that see not ; and ears, that hear not.

What greater motive to a religious life, than the vanity of all worldly enjoyments ; and yet, who can help seeing and feeling this every day of his life ?

What greater call to look toward God, than the pains, sickness, and vexations of this life ; and yet whose eyes and ears are not daily witnesses of them !

What miracles could more strongly appeal to our

senses, or what message from heaven speak louder to us, than the daily departure of our fellow creatures ?

So that the one thing needful, is not left to be discovered by fine reasoning, and deep reflections ; but is pressed upon us in the plainest manner, by the experience of our senses ; by every thing, we meet in life.

Let us intend to see and hear, and then the whole world becomes a book of wisdom and instruction to us ; all, that is regular in nature ; all, that is accidental in the course of things ; all the disappointments, that happen to ourselves ; all the miseries and errors, we see in other people ; become so many plain lessons of advice to us ; teaching us with as much assurance, as an angel from heaven, that we can in no way, raise ourselves to true happiness, but by turning our thoughts, our wishes, and endeavours, after the happiness of another life.

If you would carry this intention about you of profiting by the follies of the world, and of learning the greatness of religion, from the vanity of every other way of life ; you would find every day, every place, and every person, a fresh proof of their wisdom, who choose to live wholly to God. You would then return home, wiser, better, and more strengthened in religion, by every thing, that has fallen in your way.

Octavius is an ingenious man, well versed in most parts of literature, and no stranger to any kingdom in Europe. The other day, being just recovered from a lingering fever, he took upon him to talk thus to his friends.

My glass, says he, is almost run out ; and your eyes see how many marks of age and death I bear about me ; but I plainly feel myself sinking away faster, than any standers by imagine. I fully believe, that one year more will conclude my reckoning.

The attention of his friends was much raised by such a declaration, expecting to hear something truly excellent from so learned a man, who had but a year longer to live. When Octavius proceeded in this manner : for these reasons, says he, my friends, I have left off all

taverns ; the wine of those places is not good enough for me in this decay of nature. I must now be nice in what I drink ; I can't do, as I have done ; and therefore I am resolved to furnish my own cellar with a little of the very best, though it cost me ever so much.

I must also tell you, my friends, that age forces a man to be wise in many other respects, and makes us change many of our opinions and practices.

You know, how much I have liked a large acquaintance ; I now condemn it, as an error. Three or four cheerful, diverting companions, is all, I now desire, because I find that in my present infirmities, if I am left alone, or to grave company, I am not so easy to myself.

A few days after Octavius had made this declaration to his friends, he relapsed into his former illness, was committed to a nurse, who closed his eyes, before his fresh parcel of wine came in.

Young Eugenius, who was present at this discourse, went home a new man, with resolutions of devoting himself wholly to God.

I never, said Eugenius, was so deeply affected with the wisdom and importance of religion, as when I saw how poorly the learned Octavius was to leave the world through the want of it.

How often had I envied his great learning, his skill in language, his knowledge of antiquity, his address, and fine manner of expressing himself on all subjects ! But when I saw how poorly it all ended, and how foolishly the master of these accomplishments was then forced to talk, for want of being acquainted with the joys of piety ; I was convinced, that there was nothing to be desired, but a life of true piety ; nor any thing so poor and comfortless, as a death without it.

Now, as the young Eugenius was thus instructed in the present case ; so, if you are so happy as to have any thing of his thoughtful temper, you will meet instruction of this kind ; you will find that arguments for the wisdom and happiness of strict piety, offer themselves in all



places, and appeal to all your senses in the plainest manner.

You will find, that all the world preaches to an attentive mind; and that, if you have but ears to hear, every thing you meet, teaches you some lesson of wisdom.

If to these instructions, which we receive from the state of human life; we add the lights of religion, those great truths, which the Son of God has taught us; it will be as certain that there is but one happiness for man, as that there is but one God. For since religion teaches us that our souls are immortal, that piety and devotion will carry them to the eternal enjoyment of God; and that carnal, worldly tempers will sink them into everlasting misery; what gross stupidity is it, to give the name of happiness to any thing, but that, which carries us to happiness in God?

Did all die with our bodies, there might be some pretence for those different sorts of happiness, so much talked of: but since all men are to be immortal in misery or happiness, in a world, entirely different from this; since they are all hastening hence as fast, as death can cut them down; some in sickness, some in health, some sleeping, some waking, some at midnight, others at cock crowing; is it not certain, that no man can exceed another in happiness, but so far, as he exceeds him in those virtues, which fit him for a happier death?

Cognatus is a sober, regular clergyman, of good repute in the world, and well esteemed in his parish. All his parishioners say, he is an honest man, and very notable at making a bargain. The farmers listen to him with great attention, when he talks of the properest time of selling corn. He has been twenty years a diligent observer of markets, and has raised a considerable fortune by good management.

Cognatus is very orthodox; and, if he has not prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, it is because his predecessor had not used the parish to any such custom.

As he cannot serve both his livings himself, so he

makes it matter of conscience to keep a sober curate on one of them, whom he hires to take care of all the souls in the parish, at as cheap a rate as a sober man can be procured.

Cognatus has been very prosperous all his time ; but still he has had the vexations, that they have, who are deep in worldly business. Taxes, losses, bad mortgages, bad tenants, and the hardness of the times, are frequent subjects of his conversation ; and a bad season has a great effect on his spirits.

Cognatus has no other end in growing rich, but that he may leave a considerable fortune to a niece ; whom he has politely educated in expensive finery, by what he has saved out of the tythes of two livings.

The neighbours look on Cognatus, as a happy clergyman, because they see him in good circumstances ; and some of them intend to dedicate their own sons to the church ; because they see, how well it has succeeded with Cognatus, whose father was but an ordinary man,

But, if Cognatus, when he first entered into holy orders, had perceived, how absurd a thing it is, to grow rich by the gospel ; if he had proposed to himself the example of some primitive father ; if, instead of twenty years care, to lay up treasures on earth, he had distributed the income of every year in acts of charity and compassion ; if, instead of tempting his niece to be proud, and providing her with such ornaments, as the apostle forbids, he had clothed, comforted, and assisted numbers of widows, orphans, and distressed, who were all to appear for him at the last day ; if, instead of the anxieties of bad bonds, mortgages and bargains, he had had the comfort of knowing that his treasure was securely laid up, where neither moth corrupteth, nor thieves break through and steal ; could it with any reason be said, that he had mistaken the spirit and dignity of his order, or lessened any of that happiness, which is to be found in his sacred employment ?

If he had thought it as unbecoming the office of a clergyman, to traffic for gain in holy things, as to open a shop ; if he had thought it better, to recommend some

honest labor to his niece, than to support her in idleness; if this had been the spirit of Cognatus; could it with reason be said, that these rules of religion, this strictness of piety, had robbed Cognatus of any real happiness?

As this cannot be said in the present case; so in every other kind of life, if you enter into the particulars of it, you will find that, however prosperous it may seem, yet you cannot add piety to any part of it, without adding so much of a better happiness to it.

Look at that condition of life which draws the envy of all eyes. Negotius is a temperate, honest man. He served his time under a master of great trade; but has by his own management made it a more considerable business, than ever it was before. For thirty years last past, he has written fifty or sixty letters in a week, and is busy in corresponding with all parts of Europe. The general good of trade seems to Negotius to be the general good of life; whatever he commends or condemns in church or state, is commended, or condemned, with some regard to trade.

As money is continually pouring in upon him; so he often lets it go in various kinds of expense and generosity; and sometimes in ways of charity.

Negotius is always ready to join in any public contribution; if a purse is making at any place, where he happens to be, whether it be for a horse race, or to redeem a prisoner out of jail; you are sure of having something from him.

If you ask, what it is, that has secured Negotius from scandalous vices; it is the same thing, that has kept him from all strictness of devotion; it is his great business. He has always had too many important things in his head; his thoughts have been too much employed, to suffer him to fall either into any course of rakery, or to feel the necessity of an inward, solid piety.

For this reason he hears of the pleasures of debauchery, and the pleasures of piety, with the same indifference; and has no more desire of living in the one, than in the other, because neither of them consists with that

turn of mind and multiplicity of business, which are his happiness.

If Negotius were asked, what it is, he aims at in life? He would be as much at a loss for an answer, as if he were asked, what any other person is thinking of. For, though he always seems to himself to know, what he is doing, and has many things in his head, which are the motives of his actions; yet he cannot tell you of any one general end of life, that he has chosen with deliberation, as being truly worthy of all his labor and pains.

He has several confused notions in his head; such as that it is something great, to have more business, than other people; to grow continually richer and richer, and to raise an immense fortune before he dies. The thing, that seems to give Negotius the greatest spirit, and to be most in his thoughts, is an expectation, that he shall die richer, than any of his business ever did.

Let it be supposed, that this same Negotius was a painful, laborious man; that he was sober and regular in his business. Let it be supposed that he grew old in this course of trading; and that the design of all his labor, and care was only this, that he might die, possessed of more than a hundred thousand pair of boots and spurs, and as many great coats.

Let it be supposed, that the sober part of the world say of him, when he is dead, that he was a great and happy man, a thorough master of business, and had acquired a hundred thousand pair of boots and spurs, when he died.

Now, if this were really the case; it would be readily granted; that a life of such business was as poor and ridiculous, as any that can be invented. But it would puzzle any one to show that a man that has spent all his time and thoughts in business and hurry, that he might die worth a hundred thousand pounds, is any whit wiser, than he, who has taken the same pains, to have as many pair of boots and spurs, when he leaves the world.

For if the state of our souls be our whole state; if the

only end of life be to die as free from sin, and as exalted in virtue, as we can ; if naked, as we came, so naked are we to return ; and to stand a trial before Christ, and his holy angels, for everlasting happiness or misery ; what can it possibly signify, what a man had or had not, in this world ? What can it signify, what you call those things, which a man has left behind him ; whether you call them his, or any one's else ; whether you call them trees, or fields, or birds, or feathers ; whether you call them a hundred thousand pounds, or a hundred thousand pair of boots and spurs ?

Now it is easy to see the folly of a life thus spent, to furnish a man with such a number of boots and spurs. But yet there needs no better understanding, to see the folly of a life, spent in making a man a possessor of ten towns, before he dies.

For, if when he has got all his towns, or all his boots, his soul is to go to its own place among separate spirits, and his body be laid in a coffin, till the last trumpet calls him to judgment ; where the inquiry will be, how humbly, how devoutly, how purely, how meekly, how piously, how charitably, how heavenly we have spoken, thought, and acted, while in the body ; how can we say that he, who wore out his life in raising a hundred thousand pounds, acted wiser for himself, than he, who had the same care, to procure a hundred thousand of any thing else ?

Let it now be supposed, that Negotius, when he first entered into business, happening to read the gospel with attention, and eyes open, found that he had a much greater business on his hands, than that, to which he had served an apprenticeship ; that there were things, which belong to man, of much greater importance, than all our eyes can see ; so glorious, as to deserve all our thoughts ; so dangerous as to need all our care ; and so certain, as never to deceive the faithful laborer ; let it be supposed, that from reading this book, he had discovered that his soul was more to him, than his body ; that it was better to grow in the virtues of the soul, than to have a full purse ; that it was better to be fit for heaven than to have a variety of fine houses on earth ; to secure ever-

lasting happiness, than to have plenty of things, he cannot keep; better to live in habits of humility, piety, devotion, charity and self denial, than to die unprepared for judgment; better to be like our Saviour, than to excel all the tradesmen in the world in business and bulk of fortune; let it be supposed, that Negotius, believing these things to be true, entirely devoted himself to God at his first setting out in the world, resolving to pursue his business no farther, than was consistent with devotion, humility, and self denial; and for no other end, than to provide himself a sober subsistence, and to do all the good, that he could, to the souls and bodies of his fellow creatures; let it therefore be supposed, that, instead of continual hurry of business, he was frequent in his retirements, and a strict observer of the hours of prayer; that, instead of restless desires after more riches, his soul had been full of the love of God and constantly aspiring after divine grace; that, instead of worldly contrivances, he was busy in fortifying his soul against all approaches of sin; that, instead of a splendid life, he exercised all instances of humility and lowliness; that instead of full tables, his house furnished only sober refreshment to those that wanted it; let it be supposed, that, his contentment kept him free from all kinds of envy; that his piety made him thankful to God in all crosses and disappointments; that his charity kept him from being rich, by a continual distribution to objects of compassion; had this been the spirit of Negotius; can any one say, that he had lost the true happiness of life, by thus conforming to the spirit of the gospel?

Can it be said, that a life, made exemplary by such virtues, as these, which keep heaven always in our sight; which both delight and exalt the soul here, and prepare it for the presence of God hereafter; must be poor and dull, if compared to that of heaping up riches?

It would be endless, to multiply examples of this kind, to show how little is lost, and how much is gained, by introducing strict piety into every condition of human life.

I shall now therefore leave it to your own meditation,

to carry this way of thinking farther ; hoping that you are convinced, that true piety is so far from rendering life dull and tiresome, that it is the only joy and happiness of every condition in the world.

Imagine to yourself a person in a consumption, or any other lingering distemper, that was incurable.

If you see such a man wholly intent upon doing every thing in the spirit of religion, making the wisest use of his time, fortune, and abilities ; carrying every duty of piety to its greatest height, and striving to have all the advantage, that could be had from the remainder of his life ; if he avoided all business, but such, as was necessary ; if he were averse to the follies and vanities of the world ; and sought for all his comfort in the hopes of religion ; you would certainly commend his prudence ; you would say, he had taken the right method, to make himself as happy, as any one can be, in a state of such infirmity.

On the other hand, if you should see the same person, with trembling hands, short breath, and hollow eyes, wholly intent upon business and bargains as long as he could speak ; if you should see him pleased with fine clothes, when he could scarcely stand to be dressed, and laying out his money in horses and dogs ; you would certainly condemn him, as a weak man.

Now, as it is easy to see the reasonableness, wisdom, and happiness of a religious spirit in a consumptive man ; so you may as easily perceive the wisdom and happiness of a pious temper in every other state of life. For, how soon will every man, that is in health, be in the state of him, that is in a consumption ? How soon will he want the same comforts and satisfactions of religion which every dying man wants ? And if it be wise, to live piously, because we have not above a year to live ; is it not more wise, because we may have more years to come ? If one year of piety, before we die, is so desirable ; is not more years of piety much more desirable ?

If a man had five fixed years to live ; he could not possibly think at all, without intending to make the best

use of them all. When he saw his stay so short in this world, he must needs think that this was not a world for him ; and, when he saw how near he was to another world, that was eternal ; he must surely think it very necessary, to be very diligent in preparing himself for it.

Now as reasonable, as piety appears in such a circumstance of life ; it is yet more reasonable, in every circumstance of life, to every thinking man. For who, but a madman, can reckon, that he has five years certain to come ? And, if it be reasonable, to deny our worldly temper, and live wholly to God, because we are certain, that we are to die at the end of five years ; surely it must be more reasonable, to live in the same spirit, because we have no certainty, that we shall live five weeks.

If we were to add twenty years to the five, which is in all probability more, than will be added to the lives of many people, who are at man's estate ; how small a difference is there between five and twenty five years !

It is said, that a day is with God, as a thousand years, and a thousand years, as one day ; because, in regard to his eternity, this difference is, as nothing. Now, as we are created, to live in an endless succession of ages upon ages, where thousands, and millions of thousands of years will have no proportion to our everlasting life in God ; so, with regard to this eternal state, twenty five years are as poor a pittance, as twenty five days.

We can never make any true judgment of time, without considering the true state of our duration. If we are temporary beings, then a little time may justly be called a great deal in relation to us ; but, if we are eternal beings ; then the difference of a few years is, as nothing.

If we were to suppose three different sorts of rational beings, all of different, but fixed duration ; one sort, that lived certainly only a month ; the other a year ; and the third a hundred years ; if these beings were to meet together, and talk about time, they must talk in a very different language ; half an hour to those, that were to



live but a month, must be a very different thing, from what it is to those, who are to live a hundred years.

Now since our eternal state is as certainly ours, as our present state ; since we are as certainly to live for ever, as we now live at all ; it is plain, that we cannot judge of the value of any particular time, but by comparing it to that eternal duration, for which we are created ; if you would know, what five years signify to a being, that was to live a hundred ; you must compare five to a hundred, and see what proportion it bears to it, and then you will judge right.

So, if you would know what twenty years signify to a son of Adam ; you must compare it, not to a million of ages, but to an eternal duration, to which no number of millions bears any proportion.

Consider therefore, how would you condemn the folly of a man, who should lose his share of future glory, for the sake of being rich, or great, or praised, or delighted in any enjoyment, only one poor day, before he was to die.

But, if the time will come, when a number of years will seem less to every one, than a day does now ; what a condemnation must it then be, if eternal happiness should appear to be lost, for something less, than the enjoyment of a day !

Why does a day seem a trifle to us now ? It is because we have years to set against it. It is the duration of years, that makes it appear, as nothing.

What a trifle therefore must the years of a man's age appear, when they are set against eternity ; when there shall be nothing, but eternity, to compare them with.

Now this will be the case of every man as soon, as he is out of the body ; he will forget the distinctions of days and years, and measure time, not by the course of the sun, but by setting it against eternity.

As the fixed stars, by reason of our being placed at such distance from them, appear as so many points ; so, when placed in eternity, we shall look back on all time ; it will all appear but a moment.

Then, an indulgence, a prosperity, of fifty years, will seem to every one, that looks back upon it, as the same short enjoyment, as if he had been snatched away in his first sin.

These few reflections on time are only to show how miserably they judge, who are less careful of the eternal state, because they may be at some years' distance from it, than they would be, if they knew they were within a few weeks of it.

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## CHAP. XIV.

*Concerning that part of devotion, which relates to times and hours of prayer. How we are to improve our forms of prayer, and how to increase the spirit of devotion.*

HAVING shown the necessity of a devout spirit or habit of mind in every part of our common life, in the use of all the gifts of God; I come now to consider that part of devotion, which relates to times and hours of prayer.

I take it for granted, that every Christian, who is in health, is up early in the morning; for it is much more reasonable, to suppose a person up early, because he is a Christian, than because he is a laborer, or a tradesman, or a servant. We know not, how to think any good of him, who is such a slave to drowsiness, as to neglect his business for it.

Let this therefore teach us to conceive, how odious we must appear in the sight of Heaven, if we are in bed, shut up in sleep and darkness, when we should be praising God; and are such slaves to drowsiness, as to neglect our devotions for it.

For, if he is to be blamed, as a slothful drone, that rather chooses the indulgence of sleep, than to perform his share of worldly business ; how much is he to be reproached, who had rather lie folded up in a bed, than be raising up his heart to God in acts of praise and adoration ?

Prayer is the nearest approach to God, and the highest enjoyment of him, that we are capable of in this life.

It is the noblest exercise of the soul ; the most exalted use of our best faculties.

When our hearts are full of God, sending up holy desires to the throne of grace ; we are upon the utmost heights of human greatness ; we are in the presence and audience of the Lord of the world.

On the other hand, sleep is so far from being intended as an enjoyment ; that we are forced to receive it in a state of insensibility, or in the folly of dreams.

Sleep is such a stupid state of existence, that even among mere animals, we despise them most, which are most drowsy. He therefore, who chooses to enlarge the slothful indulgence of sleep rather, than be early at his devotions to God ; chooses the duller refreshment of the body before the highest, noblest employment of the soul ; he chooses that state, which is a reproach to mere animals rather, than that exercise, which is the glory of angels.

You will perhaps say, though you rise late ; yet you are always careful of your devotions, when you are up.

It may be so. But what then ? Is it well done, to rise late, because you pray, when you are up ? Is it pardonable to waste a great part of the day in bed, because some time after you say your prayers ? It is as much your duty, to rise to pray ; as to pray when you are risen. If you are late at your prayers, you offer to God the prayers of an idle, slothful worshipper, that rises to prayers, as idle servants rise to their labor.

If you fancy you are careful of your devotions, when you are up, though it be your custom to rise late ; you deceive yourself, for you cannot perform your devotions, as you ought. For he, that cannot deny himself this

drowsy indulgence, is not prepared for prayer, when he is up. He may indeed easily read over a form of prayer; but he is not disposed to enter into the true spirit of prayer. For sleep, thus indulged, gives a softness to our temper, and makes us unable to relish any thing, but what suits an idle state of mind, and gratifies our natural temper. He, that places any happiness in this morning indulgence, would be glad to have all the day made happy in the same manner.

Surely no one will pretend to say he knows the true happiness of prayer, who does not think it worth his while to be early at it.

It is not possible in nature for an epicure to be truly devout; he must renounce this habit of sensuality, before he can relish the happiness of devotion.

Now he, that turns sleep into an idle indulgence, does as much to disorder his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, and keep it incapable of a devout and heavenly temper; as he, that turns the necessities of eating into a course of indulgence.

A person that eats and drinks too much, does not feel such effects from it, as those do, who live in notorious instances of gluttony and intemperance; but yet his course of indulgence, though it be not scandalous in the eyes of the world; nor such as torments his own conscience; is a great and constant hindrance to his improvement in virtue; it gives him eyes, that see not; and ears that hear not; it creates a sensuality in the soul, increases the power of bodily passions, and makes him incapable of entering into the true spirit of religion.

Now this is the case of those, who waste their time in sleep; it does not disorder their lives nor wound their consciences, as notorious acts of intemperance do; but it silently, and by smaller degrees, wears away the spirit of religion, and sinks the soul into a state of dullness and sensuality.

If you consider devotion, only as a time of so much prayer; you may perhaps perform it, though you live in this daily indulgence; but, if you consider it, as a state of the heart; as a lively fervor of the soul, that is deep-

ly affected with a sense of his own infirmities, and desiring the spirit of God more, than all things in the world ; you will find that the spirit of indulgence, and the spirit of prayer cannot subsist together.

If our blessed Lord used to pray early before day ; if he spent whole nights in prayer ; if the devout Anna was day and night in the temple ; if St. Paul and Silas at midnight sang praises unto God ; are they not so many proofs of the whole turn of their minds ?

If you live in a contrary state, wasting a great part of every day in sleep ; is it not equally certain that this practice as much shows the whole turn of your mind ?

So that, if this indulgence is your way of life ; you have as much reason to believe yourself destitute of the true spirit of devotion, as you have to believe the apostles were truly devout.

When you read the Scriptures, you see a religion that is all life, and spirit, and joy in God ; that supposes our soul risen from earthly desires, and bodily indulgences, to prepare for another world, and other enjoyments. You see Christians represented, as temples of the Holy Ghost ; as children of the day ; as candidates for an eternal crown ; as virgins, that have their lamps always burning. But can he be thought to have this joy in God, this care of eternity, this watchful spirit, who has not zeal enough to rise to his prayers ?

When you look into the writings and lives of the first Christians ; you see the same spirit, that you see in the Scriptures. All is reality, life, and action.

When there is the same spirit in us, that there was in the apostles and primitive Christians ; when we feel the weight of religion, as they did ; when we have their faith and hope ; we shall take up our cross and deny ourselves, as they did.

Let it now be supposed, that you imagine there is no necessity for you to be sober and vigilant, so fearful of yourself, so watchful over your passions, so careful of your salvation, as the apostles were ; that you want less self denial ; that you need not have your loins girt, and your lamps burning, as they had ; will you therefore

live in a quite contrary state? Will you make your life as constant a course of indulgence, as theirs was of strictness and self denial?

I do not insist much on the crime of wasting so much of your time in sleep, though it be a great one; but I desire you to renounce this indulgence, because it is so contrary to that zealous, watchful spirit, which was not only the spirit of Christ and his apostles, but must be the spirit of all those, who would not sink in the common corruption of the world.

Here therefore, we must fix our charge against this practice; not as having this or that particular evil; but as a general habit, that extends itself through our whole spirit, and supports a state of mind, that is wholly wrong.

It is contrary to piety; not as accidental mistakes in life are contrary to it; but as an ill habit of body is contrary to health.

On the other hand, if you rose early every morning, as a mean of redeeming your time, and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would find a mean of great piety. It would teach you to exercise power over yourself, and make you able by degrees to renounce other pleasures, that war against the soul. This one rule would dispose your mind to exactness, and be very likely to bring the remaining part of the day under rules of prudence and devotion.

But above all, it will best prepare you for the reception of the Holy Spirit. When you thus begin the day; as it puts your heart into a good state; so it will procure the assistance of the Holy Spirit; what is so planted and watered, will have an increase from God. You will then speak from your heart, your soul will be awake, your prayers will refresh you, like meat and drink; you will feel, what you say; and begin to know, what holy men have meant by fervor of devotion.

He that is thus prepared for prayer, is in a very different state from him, who has no rules of this kind; who rises by chance, as he happens to be weary of his bed, or is able to sleep no longer. If such a one pray

only with his mouth ; if his heart feel nothing of that, which he says ; if his prayers are only things of course ; if they are a form of words, which he only repeats because they are soon said ; there is nothing to be wondered at in all this ; for such dispositions are the natural effect of such a state of life.

Hoping therefore that you are convinced of the necessity of rising early to your prayers, I shall proceed to lay before you a method of daily prayer.

Though I think a form of prayer necessary and expedient for public worship ; yet, if any one can find a better way of raising his heart to God in private, than by prepared forms of prayer, I have nothing to object against it ; my design being only to assist and direct such as stand in need of assistance.

I believe it is certain, that the generality of Christians ought to use forms of prayer, at all the regular times of prayer. It seems right for every one to begin with a form of prayer ; and if, in the midst of devotions, he finds his heart ready to break forth into new and higher strains of devotion, he should leave his form for awhile, and follow those fervors of his heart, till it again wants the assistance of his useful petitions.

Sometimes our hearts have such strong apprehensions of the divine presence, are so full of deep compunction for our sins, that we cannot confess them in any language, but that of tears.

Sometimes the light of God's countenance shines so bright upon us ; we are so affected with the wonders of the love and goodness of God, that our hearts adore in a language higher, than that of words.

On the other hand, sometimes we are so unaffected with that, which concerns our souls, that our hearts are much too low for our prayers ; we cannot keep pace with our forms of confession ; we thank and praise God with forms of words, but our hearts have little or no share in them.

It is therefore highly necessary, to provide against this inconstancy of our hearts, by having at hand such forms of prayer as may best suit us, when our hearts are in

their best state, and also be most likely to raise and stir them up, when they are sunk into dullness. For, as words have a power of affecting our hearts on all occasions; so it is reasonable, that we provide ourselves such forms of expressions, as are most likely to enliven our souls and fill them with sentiments, suitable to them.

The first thing when you are upon your knees, is to shut your eyes, and with a short silence let your soul place itself in the presence of God; that is, you are to use this, or some other better method, to separate yourself from all common thoughts, and make your hearts as sensible, as you can, of the divine presence.

Now, if this recollection of spirit is necessary; how poorly must they perform their devotions, who are always in a hurry; who hardly allow themselves time to repeat their very form with any gravity or attention?

If you were to pray always in the same place; if you were to reserve that place for devotion, and not allow yourself to do any thing common in it; if you were never to be there yourself but in times of devotion; if any little room were thus used; this kind of consecration of it would have an effect upon your mind, and dispose you to such a temper, as would very much assist your devotion. This would dispose you to be always in the spirit of religion, when you were there; and fill you with wise and holy thoughts, when you were by yourself.

When you begin your petitions, use such various expressions of the attributes of God, as may make you most sensible of the greatness and power of the divine nature.

Begin therefore in words, like these: "O Being of all beings, Fountain of all light and glory, Father of men and angels, whose universal Spirit is every where present, giving life, and light, and joy, to angels in heaven, and all creatures upon earth."

Although prayer does not consist in studied expressions; yet as words have a certain power of raising thoughts in the soul; so those words, which most fully express the power and presence of God, which raise



thoughts in the soul, most suitable to the greatness and providence of God, are the most useful and edifying in our prayers.

In order to fill your prayers with excellent strains of devotion, it may be of use to observe this farther rule ;

When at any time, either in reading the Scripture or any book of piety, you meet a passage, that more than ordinarily affects your mind, and seems to give your heart a new motion toward God ; you should turn it into the form of a petition, and then give it a place in your prayers.

At all stated hours of prayer, it will be of great benefit to you, to have something fixed, and something at liberty, in your devotions. You should have some fixed subject, which is constantly to be the chief matter of your prayer at that particular time ; and yet have liberty to add such other petitions, as your condition may then require.

For instance ; as the morning is to you the beginning of new life ; as God has then given you a fresh entrance into the world ; it is highly proper, that your first devotions should be praise and thanksgiving to God, as for a new creation ; and that you should devote body and soul, all that you are, and all that you have, to his service and glory.

Receive therefore every day, as a resurrection from death, as a new enjoyment of life ; meet every rising sun with such sentiments of God's goodness, as if you had seen it, and all things, new created upon your account ; and, under the sense of so great a blessing, let your joyful heart praise and magnify so good and glorious a Creator.

Let therefore praise and thanksgiving, and oblation of yourself unto God, be always the fixed subject of your first prayers in the morning ; and then take the liberty of adding such other devotions, as the accidental difference of your state, or the accidental difference of your heart, shall then make most needful and expedient for you. For one of the greatest benefits of private devotion consists in rightly adapting our prayers to these

two conditions, the difference of our state, and the difference of our hearts.

By the difference of our state is meant the difference of our external state or condition, as of sickness, health, pains, losses, disappointments, troubles, particular mercies, or judgments from God; all sorts of kindnesses, injuries, or reproaches from other people.

Now, as these are great parts of our state of life; so our devotion will be made doubly beneficial to us, when it watches to receive and sanctify these changes of our state, and turns them into so many occasions of a more particular application to God of such thanksgivings, such resignation, such petitions, as our present state more especially requires.

He, that makes every change in his state a reason of presenting unto God some particular petitions, suitable to that change; will soon find that he has taken an excellent mean, not only of praying with fervor, but of living, as he prays.

The next condition, to which we are to adapt some part of our prayers, is the difference of our hearts; by which is meant the different state of the temper of our hearts; as of love, joy, peace, tranquillity; dulness of spirit, anxiety, discontent, motions of envy and ambition, dark and disconsolate thoughts, resentments, fretfulness, and peevish temper.

Now, as these tempers, through the weakness of our nature, will have their succession more or less, even in pious minds; so we should constantly make the present state of heart, the reason of some particular application to God.

If we are in the delightful calm of sweet and easy passions, of love and joy in God; we should then offer the grateful tribute of thanksgiving to God, for the possession of so much happiness; thankfully acknowledging him, as the bountiful Giver of it.

If, on the other hand, we feel ourselves laden with heavy passions, with dulness of spirit, anxiety and uneasiness; we must then look up to God in acts of humility, confessing our unworthiness, opening our troubles

to him, beseeching him in his good time, to lessen the weight of our infirmities, and to deliver us from such passions, as oppose the purity and perfection of our souls.

By thus watching the present state of our hearts, and suiting some of our petitions to their wants, we shall not only be well acquainted with the disorders of our souls, but also well exercised in the method of curing them.

By this wise application of our prayers, we shall get all the relief from them, that is possible ; and the very changeableness of our hearts will prove a mean of exercising a greater variety of holy tempers.

As to that part of their prayers, which is always fixed to one certain subject, in that they may use the help of some forms, composed by other persons ; but in that which they are to suit to the present state of their life, and the present state of their heart ; they must let the sense of their own condition help them to such kinds of petition, thanksgiving, or resignation, as their present state more especially requires.

If people of leisure, were to collect the best forms of devotion, to transcribe the finest passages of Scripture prayers ; if they were to collect the devotions, confessions, petitions, praises, resignations, and thanksgivings which are scattered up and down in the Psalms, and range them under proper heads, as so much proper fuel for their own devotion ; if their minds were often thus employed, sometimes meditating upon them, sometimes getting them by heart, and making them as habitual, as their own thoughts ; how fervently would they pray, who came thus prepared to prayer !

Now, though people of leisure seem called more particularly to this study of devotion ; yet persons of much business must not think themselves excused from this, or some better method of improving their devotion.

For the greater their business is, the more need they have of some such method as this, to prevent its power over their hearts ; to preserve a sense and taste of heavenly things in their minds. A little time regularly and constantly employed to any one use or end, will produce mighty effects.

It is for want of considering devotion in this light, as something, that is to be cherished with care ; as something, that is to be made part of our business ; that is to be improved with care, and method, and a diligent use of the best helps ; that so many people are so little benefited by it, and live and die strangers to that spirit of devotion, which by a prudent use of proper means, they might have enjoyed in a high degree.

For, though the spirit of devotion is the gift of God, and not attainable by any mere power of our own ; yet it is mostly given, and never withheld from those, who by a wise and diligent use of proper means, prepare themselves for the reception of it.

It is amazing to see how eagerly men employ their parts, their sagacity, time, study, application, and exercise ; how all helps are called to their assistance, when any thing is intended and desired in worldly matters ; and how little they use their parts, sagacity, and abilities, to raise and increase their devotion !

Mundanus is a man of excellent parts and clear apprehension. He is advanced in age, and has made a great figure in business ; and he is always contriving to carry every method of doing any thing well to its greatest height. The soundness and strength of his mind, and his just way of thinking upon things, make him intent on removing all imperfections.

He can tell you the defects and errors in all the common methods of trade, building, or improving land or manufactures. The clearness and strength of his understanding, which he is constantly improving, by continual exercise in these matters, by often digesting his thoughts in writing, and trying every thing every way, has rendered him a great master of most concerns in human life.

The one only thing, which has not received any benefit from his judicious mind, is his devotion ; this is just in the same poor state it was, when he was only six years of age : and the old man prays now, in that little form of words, which his mother used to hear him repeat night and morning.

Thus Mundanus, that hardly ever saw the poorest utensil, or ever took the meanest trifle into his hand, without considering, how it might be made or used to better advantage, has gone all his life long praying in the same manner, as when he was a child ; without considering, how improveable the spirit of devotion is ; how many helps a wise and reasonable man may call to his assistance ; and how necessary it is, that our prayers be enlarged, varied, and suited to the particular state and condition of our lives.

How poor and pitiable is the conduct of this man of sense ; who has so much judgment and understanding in every thing, but that, which is the whole wisdom of man ?

Classicus is a man of learning, and well versed in the best authors of antiquity. He has read them so much, that he has entered into their spirit, and can very ingeniously imitate the manner of any of them. All their thoughts are his thoughts, and he can express himself in their language. He is so great a friend to this improvement of the mind, that, if he meet a young scholar, he never fails to advise him concerning his studies.

Classicus tells his young man, he must not think that he has done enough, when he has only learnt languages ; but that he must be daily conversant with the best authors ; read them again and again, catch their spirit by living with them ; and that there is no other way of becoming like them, or of making himself a man of taste and judgment.

How wise might Classicus have been, and how much good might he have done in the world, if he had but thought as justly of devotion, as he does of learning ?

He never indeed says any thing, shocking or offensive about devotion, because he never thinks or talks about it. It suffers nothing from him, but neglect and disregard.

The two testaments would not have had so much, as a place among his books, but that they are both to be had in Greek.

Classicus thinks that he sufficiently shows his regard

for the holy Scripture, when he tells you, he has no other book of piety beside them.

It is very well, Classicus, that you prefer the Bible to all other books of piety; he has no judgment, that is not thus far of your opinion.

But, if you will have no other book of piety beside the Bible, because it is the best; how comes it, Classicus, that you do not content yourself with one of the best books among the Greeks and Romans? How comes it, that you are so greedy and eager after all of them? How comes it, that you think the knowledge of one is a necessary help to the knowledge of the other? How comes it that you are so earnest, so laborious, so expensive of time and money, to restore broken periods and scraps of the antients? How comes it, that you read so many commentators upon Cicero, Horace, and Homer; and not one upon the Gospel? How comes it, that your love of Cicero, and Ovid, makes you love to read an author, that writes like them; and yet your esteem for the Gospel gives you no desire; nay, prevents your reading such books, as breathe the very spirit of the Gospel?

How comes it, that you tell your young scholar, he must not content himself with barely understanding his authors; but must be continually reading them all, as the only mean of entering into their spirit, and forming his own judgment according to them?

Why then must the Bible lie alone in your study? Is not the piety of the followers of Jesus Christ, as good and necessary a mean of entering into the spirit and taste of the Gospel; as the reading of the antients is of entering into the spirit of antiquity?

Is the spirit of poetry only to be got by reading poets; and is not the spirit of devotion to be got in the same way; by frequent reading the holy thoughts, and pious strains of devout men?

Is your young poet to search after every line, that may give new wings to his fancy, or direct his imagination? And is it not as reasonable for him, who desires to improve in the divine life, to search after every strain

of devotion, that may kindle and inflame the holy ardour of his soul.

Do you advise your orator, to translate the best orations, to commit much of them to memory, to be frequently exercising his talent in this manner; that habits of thinking and speaking justly may be formed in his mind? And is not the same advantage to be made by books of devotion? Should not a man use them in the same way, that habits of devotion may be well formed in his soul?

The reason, why Classicus does not think and judge thus reasonably of devotion, is owing to his never thinking of it in any other manner, than as the repeating a form of words. It never entered into his head, to think of devotion, as a state of the heart; as an improvable talent of the mind; as a temper that is to increase like our reason and judgment; and to be formed in us by such a regular, diligent use of proper means, as are necessary to form any other wise habit of mind. It is for want of this, that he has been content all his life with the bare letter of prayer, and eagerly bent upon entering into the spirit of heathen poets and orators.

It is much to be lamented, that numbers of scholars are chargeable with this excessive folly; so negligent of improving their devotion, and so desirous of other poor accomplishments; as if they thought it a nobler talent, to be able to write an epigram in the turn of Martial, than to live, and think, and pray to God.

To correct this temper, and fill a man with a contrary spirit, there seems to be no more required, than the belief of the truth of Christianity.

If you ask Mundanus and Classicus, or any man of business or learning, whether piety is not the highest perfection of man, or devotion the greatest attainment in the world; they must both be forced to answer in the affirmative, or else give up the truth of the gospel.

For to set any accomplishment against devotion, or to think any thing in the world bears any proportion to its excellency, is the same absurdity in a Christian, as it

would be in a philosopher to prefer a meal's meat to the greatest improvement in knowledge.

For, as philosophy professes purely the search and inquiry after knowledge ; so Christianity supposes, desires, and aims at nothing else, but the raising fallen man to a divine life ; to such habits of holiness, such degrees of devotion, as may fit him to enter among the holy inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven.

He, that does not believe this of Christianity, may be reckoned an infidel ; and he, that believes thus much, has faith enough to give him a right judgment of the value of things, and enable him to conquer the temptations, which the world shall lay in his way.

Devotion is nothing, but right apprehensions and right affections toward God. All practices therefore, that heighten and improve our true apprehensions of God ; that tend to nourish, raise, and fix our affections upon him, are to be reckoned so many helps and means to fill us with devotion.

As prayer is the proper fuel of this holy flame ; so we must use all our care, to give prayer its full power ; as by frequent retirement, and holy reading, composing forms for ourselves, or using the best we can get, adding length of time and observing hours of prayer ; changing improving, and suiting our devotions to the condition of our lives and the state of our hearts.

Those, who have most leisure, seem more especially called to a more eminent observance of these rules of a devout life ; and they, who by the necessity of their state, and not through their own choice, have but little time to employ thus ; must make the best use of that little, they have. For this is the certain way of making devotion produce a devout life.



## CHAP. XV.

*The subject of prayer is humility.*

ALTHOUGH the number and repetition of our prayers is of little value ; yet, since prayer, rightly and attentively performed, is the most natural mean of amending and purifying our hearts ; since opportunity and frequency in prayer is as much pressed upon us by scripture, as prayer itself ; we may be sure that, when we are frequent and importunate in our prayers, we are taking the best mean of obtaining the highest benefits of a devout life.

If you are of a devout spirit, you will rejoice at these returns of prayer, which keep your soul in an holy enjoyment of God ; which change your passions into divine love, and fill your heart with stronger joys and consolations, than you can possibly meet in any thing else.

If a worldly minded man prayed every day against all the instances of a worldly temper ; if he should make a large description of the temptations of covetousness, and desire God to assist him to reject them all, and to disappoint him in all his covetous designs ; he would find his conscience so much awakened, that he would be forced, either to forsake such prayers, or to forsake a worldly life.

The same will hold true, in any other instance. If we ask, and have not, it is because we ask amiss. Because we ask in cold and general forms ; such, as only name the virtues, without describing their particular parts ; such as are not enough particular to our condition, and therefore make no change in our hearts. Whereas when a man enumerates all the parts of any

virtue in his prayers, his conscience is thereby awakened, and he is frightened at seeing, how far short he is of it.

Because a humble state of soul is the very state of religion ; because humility is the life and soul of piety ; the foundation and support of every virtue and good work ; the best security of all holy affections ; I shall recommend humility to you, as highly proper to be made the constant subject of your devotions ; earnestly desiring you to think no day safe, or likely to end well, in which you have not early put yourself in this posture of humility, and called upon God, to carry you through the day in the exercise of a meek and lowly spirit.

This virtue is so essential to the right state of our souls, that there is no pretending to a reasonable or pious life without it. We may as well think to see without eyes, or live without breath, as to live in the spirit of religion, without the spirit of humility.

Although it is thus the soul and essence of all religious duties ; yet is it, generally speaking, the least understood, the least regarded, the least desired, of all virtues among Christians.

No persons have more occasion to be afraid of the approaches of pride, than those, who have made some advances in a pious life. For pride can grow as well upon our virtues, as our vices ; and steals upon us on all occasions.

Every good thought, every good action, we do, lays us open to pride ; and exposes us to the assaults of vanity and self satisfaction.

Not only the beauty of our persons, the gifts of fortune, or our natural talents. and the distinctions of life ; but even our devotions and alms, our fastings and humiliations, expose us to strong temptations of this evil spirit.

For this reason, I so earnestly advise every devout person, to begin every day in this exercise of humility, that he may go on in safety under the protection of his good guide, and not fall a sacrifice to his own progress

in those virtues which are to save mankind from destruction.

Humility does not consist in having a worse opinion of ourselves, than we deserve ; nor in abasing ourselves lower, than we really are. But, as all virtue is founded in truth ; so humility is founded in a true and just sense of our weakness, misery, and sin. He, that rightly feels and lives in this sense of his condition, lives in humility.

The weakness of our state appears from our inability to do any thing, as of ourselves. In our natural state we are entirely without any power ; we are indeed active beings, but can only act by a power, that is every moment lent us from God.

We have no more power of our own to move a hand, or stir a foot, than to move the sun, or stop the clouds.

When we speak a word, we feel no more power in ourselves to do it, than we feel ourselves able to raise the dead. For we act no more within our own power, or by our own strength, when we speak a word or make a sound, than the apostles acted within their own power, or by their own strength when a word from their mouth cast out devils, and cured diseases.

As it was solely the power of God, that enabled them to speak to such purposes, so it is solely the power of God, that enables us to speak at all.

We indeed find that we can speak, as we find that we are alive ; but the actual exercise of speaking is no more in our own power, than the actual enjoyment of life.

This is the dependent, helpless poverty of our state ; which is a great reason for humility. For, since we neither are, nor can do any thing of ourselves ; to be proud of any thing that we are, or of any thing, that we can do, and to ascribe glory to ourselves for these things, as our own ornaments, has the guilt of stealing and lying. It has the guilt of stealing, as it gives to ourselves those things, which belong to God. It has the guilt of lying, as it is the denying the truth of our state, and pretending to be something, that we are not.

Another argument for humility is founded in the misery of our condition.

Now the misery of our condition appears in this, that we use the borrowed powers of our nature, to the torment and vexation of ourselves, and our fellow creatures.

God has entrusted us with the use of reason, and we use it to the disorder and corruption of our nature. We reason ourselves into all kinds of folly and misery, and make our lives the sport of foolish and extravagant passions; Seeking imaginary happiness in all shapes, creating to ourselves a thousand wants, amusing our hearts with false hopes and fears, using the world worse, than irrational animals, envying, vexing; and tormenting one another with restless passions, and unreasonable contentions.

Let any man look back on his life, and see, what use he has made of his reason; how little he has consulted and followed it. What foolish passions, what vain thoughts, what needless labors, what extravagant projects, have taken up the greatest part of his life. How foolish he has been in his words and conversation; how seldom he has done well with judgment, and how often he has been kept from doing ill by accident; how seldom he has been able to please himself, and how often he has displeased others; how often he has changed his counsels; how often he has been enraged at trifles, pleased and displeased with the very same things, and constantly changing from one vanity to another. Let a man take this view of his life, and he will see reason enough to confess, that pride was not made for man.

Let him consider, that, if the world knew all that of him, which he knows of himself; if they saw, what vanity and passion govern his inside, and what secret tempers corrupt his best actions; he would have no more pretence to be honoured for his goodness and wisdom, than a distempered body to be admired for its beauty and comeliness.

This is so true, and so known to the hearts of almost all people, that nothing would appear more dreadful to them, than to have their hearts thus fully discovered to the eyes of all beholders.

Perhaps there are very few persons, who would not rather die, than have all their secret follies, the errors of their judgment, the vanity of their minds, the falseness of their pretences, the frequency of their vain and disorderly passions, their uneasiness, hatreds, envies, and vexations, made known to the world. And shall pride be entertained in a heart, thus conscious of its own miserable behaviour?

Shall such a creature, because his shame is only known to God; and his own conscience dare to be vain and proud of himself?

If to this we add the shame and guilt of sin, we shall find still greater reason for humility.

No creature, that had lived in innocence, would have thereby any pretence for self esteem; because, as a creature, all that it is, or has, or does, is from God; and therefore the honor of all is only due to God.

But if a creature that is under the displeasure of the Governor of the world, and deserving nothing from him but pains and punishments for the shameful abuse of his powers; if such a creature pretends to self glory for any thing that he is, or does; he can only be said to glory in his shame.

How monstrous and shameful the nature of sin is, is apparent from that great atonement, necessary to cleanse us from the guilt of it.

Nothing less has been required, to take away the guilt of our sins, than the sufferings and death of the Son of God. Had he not taken our nature upon him, our nature had been forever separated from God, and incapable of ever appearing before him. Is there any room for pride, while we are partakers of such a nature, as this?

Have our sins rendered us so odious to him, that made us, that he could not so much, as receive our prayers, or admit our repentance, till the Son of God made himself man, and became a suffering advocate for our whole race; and can we in this state pretend to high thoughts of ourselves?

Thus deep is the foundation of humility laid in these deplorable circumstances of our condition; which shows

that it is as great an offence against truth, for a man in this state of things to lay claim to any degree of glory, as to pretend to the honor of creating himself. If man will boast of any thing as his own, he must boast of his misery and sin ; for there is nothing else, but this, that is his own property.

Turn your eye toward heaven, and fancy that you see cherubim and seraphim, and all the glorious inhabitants of that place, united in one work ; not seeking glory from one another, not laboring their own advancement, not contemplating their own perfections, not singing their own praises, not valuing themselves, and despising others ; all happy in one and the same joy ; *casting down their crowns before the throne of God, giving glory, and honor, and power to him alone.*

Then consider, how unreasonable it must be, for such poor worms, such miserable sinners, to take delight in their own fancied glories, while the most glorious sons of heaven seek no other greatness and honor, but that of ascribing all honor, and greatness, and glory to God alone ?

Pride is the disorder of the fallen world, it has no place among other beings ; it can only subsist, where ignorance and sensuality, lies and falsehood, lusts and impurity reign.

Let a man, when he is most delighted with his own figure, contemplate our blessed Lord stretched out, and nailed upon a cross ; and then let him consider, how absurd it must be, for a heart, full of pride and vanity, to pray to God, through the sufferings of such a meek and crucified Saviour ?

These are the reflections, which you are often to meditate upon, that you may thereby be disposed to walk before God and man in such a spirit of humility, as becomes the weak, miserable, sinful state of all, who are descended from fallen Adam.

When you have by such general reflections as these, convinced your mind of the reasonableness of humility ; you must immediately enter yourself into the practice of this virtue, like a young beginner, that has all of it

to learn, that can learn but little at a time, and with great difficulty. You must consider, that you have not only this virtue to learn, but that you must be content to proceed as a learner in it all your time, endeavouring after greater degrees of it, and practising every day acts of humility, as you every day practise acts of devotion.

You would not imagine yourself to be devout, because in your judgment you approved of prayers, and often declared your mind in favor of devotion. Yet how many imagine themselves humble enough for no other reason, but because they often commend humility, and make vehement declarations against pride ?

Cæcus is a rich man, of good birth, and very fine parts ; he is fond of dress, curious in the smallest matters, that can add any ornament to his person. He is haughty and imperious to all his inferiors ; is full of every thing, he says or does ; and never imagines it possible, for such a judgment, as his, to be mistaken. He can bear no contradiction, and discovers the weakness of your understanding, as soon as ever you oppose him.

He changes every thing in his house, habit, and equipage, as often as any thing more elegant comes in his way. Cæcus would have been very religious, but that he always thought he was so.

There is nothing so odious to Cæcus as a proud man ; and the misfortune is, that he discovers in almost every body, some strokes of vanity.

On the other hand, he is exceeding fond of humble and modest persons. Humility, says he, is so amiable a quality, that it forces our esteem, wherever we meet it. There is no possibility of despising the meanest person, that has it ; nor of esteeming the greatest man, that wants it.

Cæcus no more suspects himself to be proud, than he suspects his want of sense. The reason is, because he finds himself in love with humility, and so enraged at pride.

It is true, Cæcus, you speak sincerely, when you say, you love humility, and abhor pride. You speak the

true sentiments of your mind ; but then take this along with you, Cæcus, that you only love humility, and hate pride, in others. You never once in your life thought of any other humility, or of any other pride, than that, which you have seen in others,

The case of Cæcus is a common case ; many live in all the instances of pride, and indulge every vanity, that can enter their minds, and yet never suspect themselves, to be governed by pride and vanity ; because they know, how much they dislike proud people, and how mightily they are pleased with humility and modesty, wherever they find them.

All their speeches in favor of humility, and all their railings against pride, are looked upon, as so many true exercises, and effects of their own humble spirit. Whereas in truth, these are so far from being proper acts or proofs of humility, that they are great arguments of the want of it.

For the fuller of pride any one is himself, the more impatient will he be at the smallest instance of it in others ; and the less humility any one has in his own mind, the more will he demand, and be delighted with it in others.

You must therefore act by a contrary measure, and reckon yourself only so far humble, as you impose every instance of humility upon yourself, and never call for it in others. So far an enemy to pride, as you never spare it in yourself, nor even censure it in other persons.

Now in order to do this, you need only consider, that pride and humility signify nothing to you, but so far, as they are your own ; that they do you neither good nor harm, but as they are the temper of your own heart.

The loving therefore of humility is of no advantage to you ; but so far, as you love to see all your own thoughts, words, and actions governed by it ; and the hating of pride does you no good, is no perfection in you, but so far, as you hate to harbour any degree of it in your own heart.



Now in order to begin, and set out well in the practice of humility, you must take it for granted, that you are proud, that you have all your life been more or less infected with this unreasonable temper.

You should believe also, that it is your greatest weakness, that your heart is most subject to it, that it is so constantly stealing upon you, that you have reason to suspect its approaches in all your actions. For this is, what most people, especially new beginners in a pious life, may with great truth think of themselves.

For there is no one vice, that is more deeply rooted in our nature, or that receives such constant nourishment from almost every thing, we think or do. There being hardly any thing in the world, that we want or use, or any action or duty of life, but pride finds some mean or other to take hold of it. So that at what time soever we begin to offer ourselves to God; we can hardly be surer of any thing, than that we have a great deal of pride to repent of.

If, therefore, you find it disagreeable to your mind, to entertain this opinion of yourself, and that you cannot put yourself among those, that want to be cured of pride; you may be as sure, as if an angel from heaven had told you, that you have not only much, but all your humility to seek.

For you can have no greater sign of a more confirmed pride, than when you think that you are humble enough. He, that thinks he loves God enough, shows himself to be an entire stranger to that holy passion; so he, that thinks he has humility enough, shows that he is not so much, as a beginner, in the practice of true humility.

## CHAP. XVI.

*Showing, how difficult the practice of humility is made, by the spirit and temper of the world.*

EVERY person, when he first applies himself to the exercise of this virtue, must consider himself, as a learner, that is to learn something, that is contrary to former tempers, and habits of mind, and which can only be got by daily and constant practice.

He has not only as much to do, as he, that has some new art or science to learn ; but he has also a great deal to unlearn. He is to forget and lay aside his own spirit, which has been a long while forming and fixing itself ; he must forget and depart from abundance of opinions, which the fashion and spirit of the world has made natural to him.

He must lay aside his own spirit ; because we are born in pride, which is as natural to us, as self love, and continually springs from it. This is one reason, why Christianity is so often represented, as a new birth, and a new spirit.

He must lay aside the opinions, he has received from the world ; because the fashion of the world, by which we have been carried away, as in a torrent, before we could pass right judgments of the value of things, is in many respects contrary to humility ; so that we must unlearn, what the spirit of the world has taught us, before we can be governed by the spirit of humility.

The devil is called in Scripture the prince of this world, because he has great power in it ; because many of its rules and principles are invented by this evil spirit, the father of all lies and falsehood, to separate us from God, and prevent our return to happiness.

Now, according to the spirit of this world, whose corrupt air we have all breathed, there are many things, that pass for great, honorable, and most desirable ; which are so far from being so, that the true greatness and honor of our nature consists in not desiring them.

To abound in wealth, to have fine houses and rich clothes, to be attended with splendor and equipage, to be beautiful in our persons, to have titles of dignity, to be above our fellow creatures, to command the obedience of other people, to be looked on with admiration, to overcome our enemies with power, to subdue all, that oppose us, to live magnificently, to eat and drink, and delight ourselves in the most costly manner ; these are the great, the honorable, the desirable things, to which the spirit of the world turns the eyes of all people. Many a man is afraid of standing still, and not engaging in the pursuit of these things, lest the world should take him for a fool.

The history of the gospel is chiefly the history of Christ's conquest over this spirit of the world ; and the number of true Christians is only the number of those, who, following the Spirit of Christ, have lived contrary to this spirit of the world.

*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world. Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth ; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.* This is the language of the New Testament. This is the mark of Christianity ; you are to be dead ; that is, dead to the spirit and temper of the world, and live a new life in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

But notwithstanding the clearness and plainness of these doctrines, which thus renounce the world ; yet great part of Christians live and die slaves to the customs and temper of the world.

How many people swell with pride and vanity for such things, as they would not know how to value at all, but that they are admired in the world ?

Would a man take ten years' more drudgery in business, to add two horses more to his coach ; but that he

knows that the world admires a coach and six? How fearful are many people of having their houses poorly furnished, or themselves meanly clothed, for this only reason, lest the world should make no account of them, and place them among mean people?

How often would a man yield to the haughtiness of others, and show a submissive temper; but that he dares not pass for such a poor spirited man in the opinion of the world. Many a man would often drop resentment, and forgive an affront; but that he is afraid, if he should, the world would not forgive him. How many would practise Christian temperance and sobriety, were it not for the censure, which the world passes upon such a life?

Others have frequent intentions of living up to the rules of Christ, which they are frightened from, by considering, what the world would say of them.

Thus do the impressions, which we have received from the world, enslave our minds, that we dare not attempt to be eminent in the sight of God, for fear of being little in the eyes of the world.

From this quarter arises the great difficulty of humility; because it cannot subsist in any mind but so far, as it is dead to the world. So that, to be truly humble, you must unlearn all those notions, which you have been all your life learning from this corrupt spirit of the world.

You can make no stand against the assaults of pride, till you stop the power of the world over you, and resolve against a blind obedience to its laws.

When you are once advanced so far, as to be able to stand still in the torrent of worldly fashions and opinions, and examine the worth and value of things, which are most admired and valued in the world; you have gone a great way in the gaining of your freedom, and have laid a good foundation for the amendment of your heart.

For as great, as the power of the world is, it is all built upon a blind obedience, and we need only open our eyes, to be quit of its power. Ask whom you will, learned or unlearned; every one seems to know and confess, that the general spirit of the world is nothing else, but folly, and extravagance.

Who will not own, that the wisdom of philosophy, the piety of religion, was always confined to a small number? And is not this expressly owning and confessing, that the common spirit of the world is neither according to the wisdom of philosophy, nor the piety of religion? The world therefore seems condemned even by itself; and therefore, I hope, you will not think it a hard saying, that, in order to be humble, you must withdraw your obedience from that vulgar spirit, which gives laws to fops and coquettes; and form your judgment according to the wisdom of philosophy and the piety of religion.

To lessen your regard for the opinion of the world, think how soon the world will disregard you, and have no more thought about you, than about the poorest animal, that died in a ditch.

Your friends, if they can, may bury you with some distinction, and set up a monument, to let posterity see that your dust lies under such a stone; and when that is done, all is done. You are blotted out of sight, and as much forgotten by the world, as if you had never belonged to it.

Think upon the rich, the great, and the learned, that have been high in the esteem of the world; many of them died in your time, and yet they are as much disregarded by the world, as if they had been only so many bubbles of water.

Think again, how many poor souls see heaven lost, and lie now expecting a miserable eternity, for their homage to a world, that thinks itself as well without them, and is just as merry, as when they were in it.

Is it therefore worth your while, to lose the smallest degree of virtue, for the sake of pleasing so bad a master, and so false a friend, as the world is? Is it worth your while, to bow your knee to such an idol, that so soon will have neither eyes, nor ears, nor a heart, to regard you; instead of serving the great, and holy, and mighty God, who will make all his servants partakers of his own eternity? Will you let the fear of a false world, that has no love for you, keep you from the fear of that

God, who created you, that he may love and bless you to all eternity ?

Lastly, you must consider, what behaviour the profession of Christianity requires of you, with regard to the world.

Now this is plainly delivered in these words ; *Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.* Christianity therefore implies a deliverance from this world.

St. John declares this opposition to the world in this manner ; *They are of the world ; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God.* This is the description of the followers of Christ ; and it is proof enough, that no people are Christians in reality, who in their hearts and tempers belong to this world. *We know, that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* Christians therefore can no farther know that they are of God, than so far as they know that they are not of the world ; that is, that they do not live according to the spirit of the world. For all the maxims, and politics of the world, lie in wickedness. He only is of God, who has overcome this world, that is, who has chosen to live by faith, and govern his actions by the principles of wisdom, revealed from God by Christ Jesus.

St. Paul takes it for a certainty, so well known to Christians, that they are no longer to be considered, as living in this world, that he thus argues from it ; *Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world ; why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances ?*

Our blessed Lord himself has fully determined this point in these words ; *They are not of this world, as I am not of this world.* This is the state of Christianity with regard to this world.

The state of Christianity implies nothing else but an entire conformity to that spirit, which Christ showed in the sacrifice of himself upon the cross.

Every man therefore is only so far a Christian, as he partakes of this spirit of Christ. It was this, that made Paul so passionately express himself, *God forbid, that I should*

*glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ; but why does he glory ? Is it, because Christ had suffered in his stead, and had excused him from suffering ? By no means. But it was because his Christian profession had called him to the honor of suffering with Christ, and of dying to the world under reproach, as he had done upon the cross. For he adds, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. This you see was the reason of his glorying in the cross of Christ, because he had called him to a like state of crucifixion to the world.*

Thus was the cross of Christ in Paul's days, the glory of Christians ; not as it signified their not being ashamed to own a Master, that was crucified ; but as it signified their glorying in a religion, which was nothing else, but a doctrine of the cross, that called them to the same suffering spirit, the same sacrifice of themselves, the same renunciation of the world, the same humility and meekness, the same patient bearing of injuries, reproaches, and contempts, and the same dying to all the greatness, honors, and happiness of the world, which Christ showed upon the cross.

He suffered, and was a sacrifice, to make our sufferings and sacrifice of ourselves fit to be received by God ; and we are to suffer, to die, and rise with Christ ; or else his crucifixion, death, and resurrection will profit us nothing.

The necessity of this conformity to all, that Christ did, and suffered upon our account, is very plain from the whole tenor of Scripture.

First, As to his sufferings ; this is the only condition of our being saved by them, if " we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him."

Secondly, As to his crucifixion. " Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him" &c. Here you see Christ is not crucified in our stead ; but unless our old man be really crucified with him, the cross of Christ will profit us nothing.

Thirdly, As to the death of Christ, the condition is this ; " If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we

shall also live with him." If therefore Christ be dead alone ; if we are not dead with him ; we are as sure, that we shall not live with him.

Lastly, as to the resurrection of Christ, the Scripture shows us, how we are to partake of the benefit of it. "If ye be risen with Christ ; seek those things, which are above ; where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Thus you see how plainly the scripture sets forth our blessed Lord, as our representative, acting, and suffering in our name ; binding and obliging us to conform to all, that he did and suffered for us.

It was for this reason, that the Holy Jesus said of his disciples, and in them of all true believers, "They are not of this world, as I am not of this world." Because all true believers, conforming to the sufferings, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ, live no longer after the spirit of this world ; but their life is hidden with Christ in God.

This is the state of separation from the world, to which Christians are called. They must so far renounce a worldly temper ; be so far governed by the things of another life, as to show, that they are really crucified, dead, and risen with Christ. It is as necessary for Christians to conform to this change of spirit, to be thus in Christ new creatures ; as it was necessary, that Christ should suffer, die, and rise again for our salvation.

How high the Christian life is placed above this world, is wonderfully described by Paul in these words ; "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh ; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh ; yet henceforth we know him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new."

He, that feels the force of these words, can hardly bear any human interpretation of them. Henceforth, says he ; that is, since the death and resurrection of Christ, the state of Christianity is become a state, that we do not even consider Christ himself, as in the flesh upon earth, but as a God of glory in heaven ; we know



and consider ourselves, not as men in the flesh, but as fellow members of a new society, that are to have our hearts and conversation in heaven.

Thus Christianity has placed us above the world; and we fall from our calling as soon, as we fall into the temper of the world.

Now, as it was the spirit of the world, that nailed our Lord to the cross; so every man, that has the spirit of Christ, will certainly be crucified by the world some way or other. Had you lived with our Savior, as his true disciple, you had then been hated, as he was; and, if you now live in his spirit, the world will be the same enemy to you now, that it was to him then. "If ye were of the world," saith our Lord, "the world would love its own; but, because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

We are apt to lose the true meaning of these words, by considering them only as a historical description of something, that was the state of our Saviour and his disciples at that time. But this is reading the scripture as a dead letter; for they exactly describe the state of true Christians at this and all other times to the end of the world.

For, as true Christianity is nothing else, but the spirit of Christ; so, whether that spirit appear in the person of Christ, his apostles, or followers in any age, it is the same thing.

You will perhaps say, the world is now become Christian; and therefore it is not to be considered in that state of opposition to Christianity, as when it was heathen.

It is granted, the world now professes Christianity; but will any one say, this Christian world is of the spirit of Christ? Are the passions of sensuality, self love, pride, covetousness, ambition, and vain glory, less contrary to the spirit of the gospel among Christians, than when they were among heathens? Or will you say, the passions of the heathen world are lost and gone?

Consider, Secondly, What you mean by the world.

This is fully described by St. John. *All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* This is an exact description of the world. Now, will you say, this world is become Christian? But, if all this still subsists; then the same world is now in being, and the same enemy to Christianity, as in St. John's days.

It was this world, that John condemned, as being not of the Father; whether, therefore, it outwardly profess, or openly persecute Christianity, it is still in the same state of contrariety to the true spirit of the gospel.

Indeed the world, by professing Christianity, is so far from being a less dangerous enemy, than it was before; that it has by its favors destroyed more Christians, than ever it did by the most violent persecution.

We must therefore be so far from considering the world, as in a state of less enmity and opposition to Christianity, than it was in the first times of the gospel; that we must guard against it, as a greater and more dangerous enemy now, than it was in those times.

It is a greater enemy, because it has greater power over Christians by its riches, honors, rewards, and protection, than it had by the fire and fury of its persecutions.

It is a more dangerous enemy, by having lost its appearance of enmity. Its outward profession of Christianity makes it no longer considered, as an enemy; and therefore people are easily persuaded, to resign themselves up, to be governed and directed by it.

How many consciences are kept quiet, on no other foundation; but because they sin under the authority of the Christian world! How many directions of the gospel lie unregarded; and how unconcernedly do particular persons read them; for no other reason, but because they seem unregarded by the Christian world?

Who could be content with seeing how contrary his life is to the gospel; but because he sees that he lives, as the Christian world does?

There is nothing therefore, that a good Christian

ought more constantly to guard against, than the authority of the Christian world.

All the passages of Scripture, which represent the world, as contrary to Christianity; which require our separation from it, as from a mammon of unrighteousness, a monster of iniquity; are to be taken in the same strict sense in relation to the present world.

For the change, the world has undergone, has only altered its method; but not lessened its power of destroying religion.

Christians had nothing to fear from the heathen world, but the loss of their lives; but the world, become a friend, makes it difficult for them to save their religion.

While pride, sensuality, covetousness, and ambition had only the authority of the heathen world, Christians were thereby made more intent on the contrary virtues. But, when pride, sensuality, covetousness, and ambition have the authority of the Christian world; then private Christians are in the utmost danger, not only of being shamed out of the practice, but of losing the very notion of the piety of the gospel.

There is therefore hardly a possibility of saving yourself from the present world, but by considering it, as the same enemy to holiness, it is represented in the scriptures; and by assuring yourself, that it is as dangerous to conform to it now as when it was heathen.

Ask yourself, is the piety, the humility, the sobriety of the Christian world, the piety, the humility and sobriety of the Christian spirit? If not, how can you be more undone by any world, than by conforming to that, which is Christian?

Need a man do more, to make his soul unfit for the mercy of God, than by being greedy of honor? Yet how can a man renounce this temper, without renouncing the temper of the world, in which you live?

How can a man be made more incapable of the spirit of Christ, than by a wrong value of money; and yet how can he be more wrong in his value of it, than by following the authority of the Christian world?

Nay, in every order and station of life, whether of learning or business, in Church or state, you cannot act up to the spirit of religion, without renouncing the temper and behaviour of those, who are of the same order and business, as yourself.

Though human prudence seems to talk wisely about the necessity of avoiding particularities; yet he, that dares not to be so weak, as to be particular, will be often obliged to avoid the most substantial duties of Christian piety.

These reflections will, I hope, help you to resist those temptations, which the authority and fashion of the world hath raised against the practice of Christian humility.

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## CHAP. XVII.

*Showing, how the education, men generally receive in their youth, makes the doctrine of humility difficult to be practised.*

ANOTHER difficulty in the practice of humility arises from our education. We are, for the most part, corruptly educated, and then committed to take our course in a corrupt world; so that it is no wonder, if examples of great piety are so seldom seen.

A great part of the world are undone, by being born and bred in families, that have no religion; where they are made vicious and irregular, by being like those, with whom they first lived.

But the education, I here intend, is such, as children generally receive from virtuous and sober parents, and learned tutors and governors.

Had we continued perfect, as God created the first man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a

sufficient self instruction for every one. But, as diseases have created the necessity of medicines and physicians ; so the change and disorder of our rational nature has introduced the necessity of education and tutors ; and, as the end of the physician is to restore nature to its own state ; so the end of education is to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education therefore is to be considered, as reason, borrowed at second hand, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection ; and, as physic may justly be called the art of restoring health ; so education should be considered in no other light, than as the art of recovering the use of reason.

Now, as the instruction of every art or science is founded on the discoveries, the wisdom, experience, and maxims of the several great men, who have labored in it ; so that human wisdom, or right use of our reason, which young people should be called to by their education, is nothing else, than the best experience and finest reasonings of men, who have devoted themselves to the study of wisdom, and improvement of human nature.

All, therefore, that great saints and dying men, when the fullest of light and conviction, and after the highest improvement of their reason, have said of the necessity of piety, of the excellency of virtue, of their duty to God, of the emptiness of riches, of the vanity of the world ; all the sentences, judgments, reasonings, and maxims of the wisest of philosophers, should constitute the common lessons of instruction for youthful minds.

This is the only way to make the young and ignorant part of the world better for the wisdom and knowledge of the wise and antient.

An education, which is not wholly intent upon this, is as much beside the point, as an art of physic, that has no regard to the restoration of health.

The youth who attended Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Epictetus, were thus educated. Their every day lessons were so many lectures on the nature of man, his true end, and the right use of his faculties ; on the im-

mortality of the soul, its relation to God, the beauty of virtue, and its agreeableness to the divine nature; on the dignity of reason, the necessity of temperance, fortitude, and generosity; and the shame and folly of indulging our passions.

Now, as Christianity has new created the moral and religious world, and set every thing, that is reasonable, wise, holy, and desirable, in its true point of light; so one would expect, that the education of youth should be as much amended by Christianity, as the faith and doctrines of religion are amended by it.

As it has introduced such a new state of things, and so fully informed us of the nature of man, the end of his creation, the state of his condition; as it has taught us the means of purifying our souls, pleasing God, and becoming eternally happy; one might naturally suppose, that every Christian country abounded with schools for teaching, not only a few questions and answers of a catechism, but for forming, training, and practising youth in such a course of life, as the highest precepts, the strictest rules, and the sublimest doctrines of Christianity require.

An education under Pythagoras, or Socrates, had no other end, than to teach youth to think, judge, act, and follow such rules of life as they used.

Is it not as reasonable to suppose, that a Christian education should have no other end, than to teach youth how to think, and judge, and act, and live, according to the strictest laws of Christianity? At least one would suppose, that in all Christian schools, the teaching of youth to begin their lives in the spirit of Christianity, in such abstinence, sobriety, humility, and devotion, as Christianity requires, should be a hundred times more regarded, than any thing else.

For our education should suggest nothing to our minds, but what is wise and holy; help us to discover and subdue every vain passion of our hearts, and every false judgment of our minds.

It is as reasonable to expect and require all this benefit of a Christian education, as to require, that physic

should strengthen all, that is right in our nature, and remove that, which is diseased.

But, alas, our modern education is not of this kind.

The first temper, we try to awaken in children, is pride ; as dangerous a passion, as that of lust. We stir them up to vain thoughts of themselves, and do every thing, to puff up their minds with a sense of their own abilities. We apply to the fire and vanity of their minds, and exhort them to every thing from corrupt motives. We stir them up to action from principles of strife and ambition, from glory, and a desire of distinction, that they may shine in the eyes of the world. We repeat and inculcate these motives, till they think it a part of their duty to be proud, and vain glorious of their accomplishments.

When we have taught them to bear no rival, to thirst after every instance of applause, to be content with nothing, but the highest distinctions ; then we begin to take comfort in them, and promise the world some mighty things from youth of such a glorious spirit.

If children are intended for holy orders ; we set before them some eminent orator, whose fine preaching has made him the admiration of the age, and carried him through all the dignities and preferments of the church. We encourage them to have these honors in their eye, and to expect the reward of their studies from them.

If the youth is intended for a trade ; we bid him look at the rich men of the same trade, and consider, how many are now carried about in their coaches, who began in the same low degree, he now does. We awaken his ambition, and endeavour to give his mind a right turn, by often telling him, how rich such and such a tradesman died.

If he is to be a lawyer ; we set great counsellors, lords, judges, and chancellors before his eyes. We tell him, what great fees, and great applause attend fine pleading. We exhort him to take fire at these things, to raise a spirit of emulation in himself, and to be content

with nothing less, than the highest honors of the long robe.

That this is the nature of our best education is too plain, to need proof; and I believe there are few parents, but would be glad to see these instructions daily given to their children.

After all this, we complain of the effects of pride; we wonder to see grown men governed by ambition, envy, and a desire of glory; not considering, that they were all their youth called upon to action and industry upon the same principles. Teach a child to thirst for distinction and applause; and is it any wonder, that he continues to act all his life in the same manner?

If a youth is ever to be so far a Christian, as to govern his heart by the doctrines of humility; I would fain know, at what time he is to begin it; or, if he is ever to begin it at all, why we train him up in a temper, quite contrary to it?

How must the doctrine of humility sound to a youth, that has been spurred up to all his industry by ambition, emulation, and a desire of distinction? And, if he is not to act by these principles when a man, why do we call him to act by them in his youth?

Envy is acknowledged by all, to be the most ungenerous, base, and wicked passion, that can enter the heart of man; and is this temper to be instilled, nourished, and established in the minds of young people?

It is said, that it is not envy, but emulation, that is intended to be awakened in the minds of young men. But this is vainly said. For, when children are taught to bear no rival, and to scorn to be out done by any of their age; they are directly taught to be envious. For it is impossible, for any one to have this scorn of being out done, and this contention with rivals, without burning with envy against those, that seem to excel him. So that, what children are taught, is rank envy, covered with a name of a less odious sound.

Secondly, If envy is thus confessedly bad, and it be emulation only, that is endeavoured to be awakened in children; surely there ought to be great care taken,



that children may know the one from the other ; that they may abominate the one, as a crime ; while they give the other admission into their minds.

But, if this were attempted, the fineness of the distinction between envy and emulation would show, that it is easier to divide them in words, than to separate them in action. For emulation, when defined in its best manner, is nothing else, than a refinement upon envy, or rather the most plausible part of that venomous passion ; and, though it is easy, to separate them in the notion ; yet the most acute philosopher, if he give himself up to emulation, will certainly find himself deep in envy. For envy is not an original temper, but the natural, necessary, and unavoidable effect of emulation, or desire of glory. So that he who establishes the one in the minds of people, necessarily fixes the other there. There is no other possible way of destroying envy, but by detroying emulation, or a desire of glory. For the one always rises and falls in proportion to the other.

I know, it is said in defence of this method of education, that ambition and a desire of glory are necessary to excite young people to industry ; and that, if we were to press upon them the doctrines of humility, we should depress their minds, and sink them into dulness, and idleness.

But the people, who say this, do not consider, that this reason, if it has any strength, is as strong against pressing the doctrines of humility in grown men, lest we sink them into dulness and idleness.

For, who does not see that middle aged men want as much the assistance of pride, ambition, and vain glory, to spur them to action, as children do ? It is very certain, that the precepts of humility are more contrary to the designs of such men, and more grievous to their minds, when they are pressed upon them, than they are to the minds of young persons.

This reason therefore, why children should not be trained up in the principles of true humility, is as good a reason, why the same humility should never be required of men.

*Thirdly,* Let those, who think that children would be spoiled, if they were not thus educated, consider this. Could they think that, if any children had been educated by our blessed Lord, or his apostles, that their minds would have been sunk into dulness and idleness? Or could they think, that such children would not have been trained up in the profoundest principles of true humility? Can they say that our blessed Lord, who was the meekest and humblest man that ever was on earth, was hindered by his humility from being the greatest example of glorious actions, ever done by man?

Can they say that his apostles, who lived in the humble spirit of their Master, did therefore cease to be laborious and active instruments of doing good to the world?

A few such reflections, are sufficient, to expose all the poor pretences for an education in pride and ambition.

Paternus lived about two hundred years ago; he had but one son, whom he educated himself in his own house. As they were sitting together in the garden, when the child was ten years old, Paternus thus began to him.

The little time, you have been in the world, my child, you have spent wholly with me; and my tenderness to you has made you look on me, as your only friend and benefactor, and the cause of all the comfort and pleasure, you enjoy; your heart I know, would be ready to break with grief, if you thought this was the last day, I should live with you.

But, my child, though you now think yourself happy, because you have hold of my hand; you are now in the hand and under the care of a much greater Father and Friend; whose love to you is far greater, than mine; from whom you receive such blessings, as no mortal can give.

That God, whom you have seen me daily worship; whom I daily call upon to bless both you and me, and all mankind; whose wondrous acts are recorded in those Scriptures, which you constantly read; that God, who created the heavens and the earth; who brought a flood

upon the world ; who saved Noah in the ark ; who was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; whom Job blessed and praised in the greatest afflictions ; who delivered the Israelites out of the hands of the Egyptians ; who was the protector of righteous Joseph, Moses, Joshua and Daniel ; who sent so many prophets into the world ; who sent his son Jesus Christ, to redeem mankind ; this God, who has done all these great things ; who has created so many millions of men, who lived and died before you were born ; with whom the spirits of good men, that are departed this life, now live ; whom infinite numbers of angels now worship in heaven ; this great God, the creator of worlds, of angels, and men, is your father and friend, your Creator and nourisher : from whom, and not from me, you received your being ten years ago, at the time I planted that little elm, which you there see.

I myself am not half the age of this shady oak, under which we sit ; many of our fathers sat under its boughs ; we have all of us called it ours in our turn ; though it stands, and drops its masters, as it drops its leaves.

You see, my son, this wide and large firmament over our heads, where the sun, and moon, and stars appear in their turns. If you were carried up to any of these bodies at this vast distance from us ; you would still discover others as much above, as the stars, you see here, are above the earth. Were you to go up or down, east or west, north or south, you would find the same height without any summit, and the same depth without any bottom.

And yet, my child, so great is God, that all these bodies, added together, are but as a grain of sand in his sight. Yet you are as much the care of this great God and Father of all worlds and all spirits, as if he had no son, but you ; or there were no creature for him to love and protect, but you alone. He numbers the hairs of your head, watches over you sleeping and waking, and has preserved you from a thousand dangers, which neither you, nor I, know any thing of.

How poor my power is, and how little I am able to

do for you, you have often seen. Your late sickness has shown you, how little I could do for you in that state; and the frequent pains of your head are proofs, that I have no power to remove them.

I can bring you food and medicines, but have no power, to turn them to your relief and nourishment; it is God alone, that can do this for you.

Therefore, my child, fear, and worship, and love God. Your eyes indeed cannot see him; but all things you see, are so many marks of his power and presence, and he is nearer to you, than any thing you see. Take him for your Lord, and Father, and Friend; look up to him, as the fountain of all the good, you have received through my hands; and reverence me, only as the bearer of God's good things to you; and he, that blessed my father, before I was born, will bless you, when I am dead.

Your little mind is acquainted only with my family; therefore you think there is no happiness out of it. But, my child, you belong to a greater family, than mine; you are a young member of the family of this Almighty Father of all nations, who has created infinite orders of angels, and numberless generations of men, to be members of one and the same society in heaven.

You do well to reverence and obey my authority; because God has given me power over you, to bring you up in his fear, and to do for you, as the fathers, recorded in Scripture, did for their children, who are now in rest with God.

I shall in a short time die, and leave you to God, and yourself; and, if God forgive my sins, I shall go to his son Jesus Christ, and live among patriarchs and prophets, saints and martyrs, where I shall hope for your safe arrival.

Therefore, my child, meditate on these great things, and your soul will soon grow great by meditating on them.

Let your thoughts often leave these gardens, fields, and farms, to contemplate God and heaven; to consider angels, and the spirits of good men in light and glory.

As you have been used to look to me in all your actions, and have been afraid to do any thing, unless you first knew my will ; so let it now be a rule of your life, to look up to God in all your actions, to do every thing in his fear, and to abstain from every thing, that is not according to his will. Bear him always in your mind, reverence him in every place ; for there is no place, where he is not.

God keepeth a book of life, wherein the actions of all men are written ; your name is there, my child, and when you die, this book will be laid open before men and angels ; and according as your actions are there found, you will either be received to the happiness of those holy men, who have died before you ; or be turned away among wicked spirits, never to see God any more.

Never forget this book, my son, for it is written, it must be opened, you must see it, and you must be tried by it. Strive therefore, to fill it with your good deeds, that the handwriting of God may not appear against you.

God, my child, is all love, and wisdom, and goodness ; and every thing, he has made, and every action, he does, is the effect of them all. Therefore you cannot please God, but so far as you strive to walk in love, wisdom, and goodness. As all wisdom, love, and goodness proceed from God ; so nothing but love, wisdom, and goodness can lead to God.

When you love that, which God loves ; you act with him, you join yourself to him ; and when you love, what he dislikes, then you oppose him, and separate yourself from him. This is the right way ; think, what God loves ; and love it with all your heart.

First of all, my child, worship and adore God ; think of him magnificently, speak of him reverently, magnify his providence, adore his power, frequent his service, and pray unto him frequently and constantly.

Next to this, love your neighbour with such tenderness and affection, as you love yourself. Think, how God loves mankind, how merciful he is to them, how

tender he is of them, how carefully he preserves them ; and then strive to love the world, as God loves it.

God would have all men to be happy ; therefore do you desire the same. All men are instances of divine love ; therefore let all men be instances of your love.

But above all, my son, mark this ; never do any thing through strife, or envy, or emulation, or vain glory.—Never do any thing, in order to excel other people ; but in order to please God, and because it is his will, that you should do every thing in the best manner. For, if it is once a pleasure to you, to excel other people ; it will by degrees be a pleasure to you, to see other people not so good, as yourself.

Banish therefore every thought of pride, and self distinction ; and accustom yourself to rejoice in the excellencies and perfections of your fellow creatures ; and be as glad to see any of their good actions, as your own.

For, as God is as well pleased with their good doings, as with yours ; so you ought to desire, that every thing wise, and holy, and good, may be performed in as high a manner by other people, as by yourself.

Let this therefore be your motive to all good actions, honest industry, and business, to do every thing in as perfect and excellent a manner, as you can, for this reason ; because it is pleasing to God, who desires your perfection, and writes all your actions in a book. When I am dead, my son, you will be master of my estate, which will be more, than the necessities of one family require. Therefore, as you are to be charitable to the souls of men, and wish them the same happiness with you in heaven ; so be charitable to their bodies, and endeavour to make them as happy, as you upon earth.

As God has created all things for the common good of all men ; so let that part of them, which is fallen to your share, be employed, as God would have all employed, for the common good.

Do good, my son ; first of all to those, that most de-

serve it ; but remember to do good to all. The greatest sinners receive daily instances of God's goodness toward them ; he nourishes and preserves them, that they may repent and return to him ; do you therefore imitate God, and think no one too bad to receive your kindness, when he wants it.

I am teaching you Latin and Greek, not that you should desire to be a great critic, a fine poet, or an eloquent orator ; I would not have your heart feel any of those desires ; for the desire of these accomplishments is a vanity of the mind, and the masters of them are generally vain men. The desire of any thing, that is not a real good, lessens the application of the mind after that, which is so. But I teach you these languages, that at proper times you may look into the history of past ages, and learn the methods of God's providence over the world. That, reading the writings of the ancient sages, you may see how wisdom and virtue have been the praise of great men of all ages, and fortify your mind by their wise sayings.

Let truth and plainness therefore be the only ornament of your language ; and study nothing, but how to think of all things, as they deserve ; to choose every thing, that is best ; to live according to reason and order ; and to act in every part of your life, in conformity to the will of God.

Study how to fill your heart full of the love of God, and the love of your neighbour ; and then be content, to be no deeper a scholar, no finer a gentleman, than these tempers will make you. As true religion is nothing, but simple nature, governed by right reason ; so it loves and requires great plainness and simplicity of life.

Therefore avoid all superfluous finery and equipage ; and let your house be plainly furnished with moderate conveniencies. Do not consider, what your estate can afford ; but what right reason requires.

Let your dress be sober, clean, and modest ; not to set out the beauty of your person, but to declare the sobriety of your mind, that your outward garb may resemble the inward plainness and simplicity of your heart.

For it is reasonable, that you be one man, and appear outwardly such, as you are inwardly.

As to your meat and drink, in them observe the rules of Christian temperance and sobriety; consider your body, only as the servant of your soul; and so nourish it, as it may best perform a humble and obedient service to it.

But, my son, observe this as a principal thing, which I shall remind you of as long, as I live with you. Despise human glory, for it is nothing but human folly. It is the greatest snare and traitor, you can possibly admit into your heart.

Love humility in all its instances, practise it in all its parts; for it is the noblest state of man; it will set your heart and affections right toward God; and fill you with every temper, that is tender and affectionate toward men.

Let every day be a day of humility; condescend to the weakness and infirmities of your fellow creatures; cover their frailties, love their excellencies, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperity, compassionate their distress, receive their friendship, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind.

Aspire after nothing, but your own purity and perfection; and have no ambition, but to do every thing in so reasonable and religious a manner, that you may be glad that God is every where present, and sees and observes all your actions. The greatest trial of humility is a humble behaviour toward your equals in age, estate, and condition of life. Therefore be careful of all the motions of your heart toward these people; let your behaviour toward them be governed by love. Have no desire to put any of your equals below you; nor anger at those, that would put themselves above you. If they are proud; they are ill of a very bad distemper; let them therefore have your tender pity; and perhaps your meekness, may prove an occasion of their cure. But, if your humility do them no good; it will however be the greatest good, you can do to yourself.



Remember that there is but one man in the world, with whom you are to have perpetual contention, and be always striving to exceed him, and that is yourself.

The time of practising these precepts, my child, will soon be over with you; the world will soon slip through your hands, or rather you will soon slip through it; it seems but the other day, since I received these same instructions from my dear father, that I am now leaving with you; and the God that gave me ears to hear, and a heart to receive, what my father said unto me, will, I hope, give you grace to love and follow the same instructions.

Thus did Paternus educate his son.

Can any one think that such an education would deject the minds of young people, and deprive the world of any worthy labors? So far from that, there is nothing so likely to ennoble the mind and prepare it for the most heroic exercise of all virtues.

For who will say, that love of God, desire of pleasing him, love of our neighbor, love of truth, of reason, and virtue; contemplation of eternity and the rewards of piety; are not stronger motives to great and good actions, than a little uncertain popular praise?

On the other hand, there is nothing in reality, that more weakens the mind; that makes it less master of its own actions, or less capable of following reason, than love of praise and honor.

For, as praise and honor are often given to persons, where they are not due; so he, that acts upon the desire of applause, must part with every other principle; he must say black is white, put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; and do the meanest, basest things, in order to be applauded.

For in a corrupt world worthy actions are to be supported only by their own worth; where instead of being praised and honored, they are often reproached and persecuted.

So that to educate children upon a motive of emulation, or desire of glory, is to destroy the natural integrity and fortitude of their minds; and give them a bias, which will often carry them to base and mean actions.

## CHAP. XVIII.

*Showing, how the method of educating daughters, makes it difficult for them to enter into the spirit of Christian humility. The spirit of a better education represented in the character of Eusebia.*

THAT turn of mind, which is encouraged in the education of daughters, makes it difficult for them to enter into such a sense and practice of humility, as the spirit of Christianity requires.

The right education of this sex is of the utmost importance to human life. There is nothing, more desirable for the common good of the world. For though women do not carry on the business of the world; yet as they are mothers, and mistresses of families, that have for some time the care of the education of their children of both sorts; they are entrusted with that, which is of the greatest consequence to human life. For this reason good or bad women are likely to do as much good or harm in the world, as good or bad men.

For, as the strength, or weakness of our bodies, is very much owing to their method of treating us, when we were young; so the soundness or folly of our minds is not less owing to those first tempers and ways of thinking, which we received from love, tenderness, and constant conversation of our mothers.

As we call our first language our mother tongue; so we may as justly call our first temper our mother temper; and perhaps it may be found more easy to forget

the language, than to part entirely with those tempers, which we learnt in the nursery.

It is therefore much to be lamented, that this sex, on whom so much depends, who have the first forming of our bodies and minds, are not only educated in pride, but in the silliest and most contemptible part of it.

They are not indeed suffered, to dispute with us the prizes of arts and sciences, of learning and eloquence, in which they would often prove our superiors; but we turn them over to the study of beauty and dress; and the whole world conspires, to make them think of nothing else. Fathers and mothers, friends and relations, seem to have no other wish toward the little girl, but that she may have a fair skin, a fine shape, dress well, and dance to admiration.

Now, if our fondness for our persons, desire of beauty, love of dress, be a part of pride (as surely it is a most contemptible part of it) the first step toward a woman's humility, seems to require repentance of her education.

For it must be owned, that, generally speaking, good parents are never more fond of their daughters, than when they see them too fond of themselves; and dressed in such a manner, as is a reproach to the gravity and sobriety of the Christian life.

What makes this matter still more to be lamented, is this; women are not only spoiled by this education, but we spoil that part of the world, which would otherwise furnish instances of an eminent and exalted piety.

For, I believe, it may be affirmed, that for the most part there is finer sense, a clearer mind, a readier apprehension, and gentler dispositions in that sex, than in the other. All which tempers, if they were truly improved by proper methods of education; would in all probability carry them to greater heights of piety, than are to be found among the generality of men.

For this reason I speak with so much plainness; because it is much to be lamented, that persons, naturally qualified to be great examples of piety, by an erroneous education become poor and gaudy spectacles of vanity.

The Church formerly had eminent saints in that sex ; and it may reasonably be thought, that it is owing to their vain education, that this honor of their sex is for the most part confined to former ages.

The corruption of the world indulges them in great vanity ; and men seem to consider them in no other view, than as so many painted idols, that are to allure and gratify their passions ; so that, if many women are vain, light, gewgaw creatures ; they have this to excuse themselves, that they are not only such, as their education has made them ; but such, as the generality of the world allows them to be.

But they should consider, that the friends to their vanity are no friends of theirs ; that they are to live for themselves ; that they have as great a share in the rational nature, as men have ; that they have as much necessity, to aspire after the highest accomplishments of a Christian and solid virtue, as the gravest and wisest among Christian philosophers.

They should consider, that they are abused and injured, and betrayed ; whenever they are taught, that any thing is an ornament in them, that is not an ornament in the wisest among mankind.

It is generally said, that women, are naturally of little and vain minds ; but this I look upon, as false and unreasonable, as to say that butchers are naturally cruel ; for, as their cruelty is not owing to their nature, but to their way of life, which has changed their nature ; so whatever vanity is to be observed in the minds of women, it is like the cruelty of butchers, a temper, that is wrought into them by that life, which they are taught and accustomed to lead.

If it were true, that they are thus naturally vain and light ; how much more blamable is that education, which seems contrived to increase this folly and weakness of their minds ? For, if it were a virtue in a woman, to be proud and vain ; we could hardly take better means, to raise this passion in her, than those that are used in their education.

Matilda is a fine woman, of good breeding, great sense,

and much religion. She has three daughters, educated by herself. She will not trust them with any one else, or at any school, for fear they should learn any thing ill. She stays with the dancing master all the time he is with them; because she will hear every thing, that is said to them. She has heard them read the scriptures so often, that they can repeat great part of it without book; and there is scarcely a book of devotion, but you may find it in their closets.

Had Matilda lived in the first ages of Christianity, when it was practised in the fulness and plainness of its doctrines; she had in all probability been one of its greatest saints. But, as she was born in corrupt times, where she wants examples of Christian perfection, and hardly ever saw piety higher, than her own; so she has many defects, and communicates them to her daughters.

Matilda was never meanly dressed in her life; and nothing pleases her in dress, but that, which is rich and beautiful to the eye.

Her daughters see her great zeal for religion; but then they see an equal earnestness for all sorts of finery. They see she is not negligent of her devotion; but then they see her more careful, to preserve her complexion, and to prevent those changes, which time and age threaten.

They are afraid to meet her, if they have missed the Church; but then they are more afraid to see her, if they are not laced as straight, as they can possibly be.

She often shows them her own picture, which was taken, when their father fell in love with her. She tells them, how distracted he was with passion at the first sight of her; and that she had never had so fine a complexion, but for the diligence of her good mother, who took exceeding care of it.

Matilda is so intent on all the arts of improving their dress, that she has some new fancy almost every day, and leaves no ornament untried, from the richest jewel to the poorest flower. She is so nice and critical in

her judgment; so sensible of the smallest error, that the maid is often forced to dress and undress her daughters three or four times in a day, before she can be satisfied with it. As to the patching, she reserves that to herself; for, she says, if they are not stuck on with judgment, they are rather a prejudice, than an advantage to the face.

The children see so plainly the temper of their mother, that they even affect to be more pleased with dress, and to be more fond of every little ornament, than they really are, merely to gain her favor.

They saw their eldest sister once severely reprimanded, for presuming to say, that she thought it better, to cover the neck, than to go so far naked, as the modern dress requires.

She stints them in their meals, and is very scrupulous of what they eat and drink; and tells them, how many fine shapes she has seen spoiled for want of such care; if a pimple rise in their faces, she is in a great fright; and they themselves are as afraid to see her with it, as if they had committed some great sin.

Whenever they begin to look healthful, she calls in the assistance of the doctor; and, if physic will keep the complexion from inclining to ruddy; she thinks it well employed.

By this mean they are poor, pale, sickly, infirm creatures; vaped through want of spirits, crying at the smallest accidents, swooning at any thing, that frights them, and hardly able to bear the weight of their best clothes.

The eldest daughter lived as long, as she could, under this discipline; and died in the twentieth year of her age.

When the body was opened, it appeared that her ribs had grown into her liver; and that her other entrails were much hurt by being crushed together with her stays; which her mother had ordered to be twitched so straight, that it often brought tears into her eyes, while the maid was dressing her.

Her youngest daughter has run away with a games-

ter, a man of great beauty, who in dressing and dancing has no superior.

Matilda says, she should die with grief at this accident, but that her conscience tells her, she has contributed nothing to it herself. She appeals to their closets, to their books of devotion, to testify, what care she has taken, to establish her children in a life of solid piety and devotion.

Now, though I do not intend to say, that no daughters are brought up in a better way; yet this I believe, may be said, that the much greater part of them are not brought up so well, or accustomed to so much religion, as in the present instance.

Their minds are turned as much to the care of their beauty and dress, and the indulgence of vain desires; as in the present case; without having such rules of devotion to stand against it. So that, if solid piety, humility, and a sober sense of themselves, is much wanted in that sex; it is the natural consequence of a vain and corrupt education; and, if they are often too ready to receive the first fops, beaux, and fine dancers, for husbands; it is no wonder, they like that in men, which they have been taught to admire in themselves.

If they are often seen to lose that little religion, they were taught in their youth; it is no more to be wondered at, than to see a flower choked and killed among rank weeds.

For personal pride and affectation, delight in beauty and finery, must either kill all religion in the soul, or be themselves killed by it; they can no more thrive together, than health and sickness.

Some people will perhaps say, I am exercising too great severity against the sex.

But more reasonable persons will observe, that I entirely spare the sex, and only arraign their education; that I not only spare them, but plead their interest, assert their honor, set forth their perfections, commend their natural tempers, and only condemn that education, which is so injurious to their interests, so debases their

honor, and deprives them of the benefit of their excellent nature and temper.

Their education I cannot spare ; but the only reason is, because it is their greatest enemy ; because it deprives the world of so many blessings, and the church of so many saints, as might reasonably be expected from persons, so formed by their natural temper to all goodness, and tenderness, and so fitted by the clearness and brightness of their minds, to contemplate, love, and admire every thing, that is holy, virtuous, and divine.

If it should here be said, that I even charge too high their education, and that they are not so much hurt by it, as I imagine ; it may be answered, that, though I do not pretend to state the exact degree of mischief, that is done by it ; yet its natural tendency to do harm is sufficient to justify the most absolute condemnation of it.

But, if any one would know, how generally women are hurt by this education ; if he imagine there may be no personal pride in those, who are patched and dressed out with so much glitter of art and ornament ; Let him only make the following experiment ;

Let him acquaint any such woman with his opinion of her ; I do not mean that he should tell her to her face, or do it in any rude, public manner ; but let him contrive the most civil, secret, friendly way, he can think of, only to let her know his opinion, that he thinks she is neither handsome, nor dresses well ; and I dare say, he will find there are but very few fine dressed women, who will not like him the worse for his bare opinion, though known to none, but themselves ; and that he will not be long without seeing the effects of her resentment.

But, if such an experiment would show him, that there are but few women, that could bear with his friendship, after they knew he had such an opinion of them ; surely it is time to accuse that education, which so generally corrupts their hearts.

For, though it is hard to judge of the hearts of peo-



ple ; yet, where they declare their resentment, at any thing ; there they pass the judgment upon themselves. If a woman cannot forgive a man, who thinks she has no beauty, nor any ornament from her dress ; she infallibly discovers the state of her heart, and is condemned by her own judgment. For we never are angry at others, but when their opinions of us are contrary to that, which we have of ourselves.

A man, that makes no pretence to scholarship, is never angry at those, who do not take him to be a scholar ; so, if a woman had no opinion of her own person and dress ; she would never be angry at those, who are of the same opinion with herself.

But how possible it is to bring up daughters in a more excellent way, let the following character declare.

Eusebia is a pious widow, well born, and well bred ; and has a good estate for five daughters, whom she brings up, as one entrusted by God, to fit five virgins for the kingdom of heaven. Her family has the same regulation, as a religious house, and all its orders tend to the support of a regular devotion.

She, her daughters, and her maids, meet together at the hours of prayer, and chant psalms, and spend the rest of their time in such good works, and innocent diversions, as render them fit to return to their psalms and prayers.

She loves them, as her spiritual children ; and they reverence her, as their spiritual mother, with an affection, far above that of the fondest friends.

She has divided part of her estate among them, that every one may be charitable out of her own stock ; and each of them take it in their turns, to provide for the poor and sick of the parish.

Eusebia brings them up to all kinds of labor, proper for women, as sewing, knitting, spinning, and all other parts of housewifery ; not for their amusement, but that they may be serviceable to themselves and others ; and be saved from those temptations, which attend an idle life.

She tells them, she had rather see them reduced to

the necessity of maintaining themselves by their own work, than to have riches, to excuse themselves from labor. For though, says she, you may be able to assist the poor without your labor ; yet by your labor you will be able to assist them more.

If Eusebia has lived as free from sin, as it is possible for human nature, it is, because she is always watching against all instances of pride. If her virtues are stronger, than other people's ; it is, because they are founded in deep humility.

My children, says she, when your father died, I was much pitied by my friends, as having all the care of a family, and the management of an estate fallen upon me.

But my own grief was founded upon another principle ; I was grieved, to see myself deprived of so faithful a friend ; and that such an eminent example of Christian virtues was taken from the eyes of his children, before they were of an age to love and follow it.

But as to worldly cares, which my friends thought so heavy upon me, they are most of them of our own making, and fall away as soon, as we know ourselves.

If a person in a dream is disturbed with strange appearances ; his trouble is over as soon, as he is awake, and sees that it was the folly of a dream. Now, when a right knowledge of ourselves enters our minds ; it makes as great a change in our thoughts and apprehensions, as when we awake from the wandering of a dream. We acknowledge a man to be mad or melancholy, who fancies himself to be glass, and so is afraid of stirring ; or, taking himself to be wax, dare not let the sun shine upon him.

But, my children, there are things in the world, which pass for wisdom, grandeur, happiness, and fine breeding, which show as great ignorance of ourselves, and might as justly pass for thorough madness, as when a man fancies himself to be glass or ice.

A woman, who dares not appear in the world without fine clothes ; who thinks it a happiness, to have a face finely colored, to have a skin delicately fair ; who had rather die, than be forced to work for a maintenance ;

is as ignorant of herself, as he, who fancies himself to be glass.

For this reason all my discourse with you has been, to acquaint you with yourselves, and to accustom you to such books and devotions, as may best instruct you in this greatest of all knowledge.

You would think it hard, not to know the family, into which you was born ; what ancestors, you were descended from, and what estate was to come to you. But, my children, you may know all this with exactness, and yet be as ignorant of yourselves, as he, who takes himself to be wax.

For, though you were all born of my body, and bear your father's name ; yet you are all pure spirits. I do not mean, that you have not bodies, that want meat, drink, sleep, and clothing ; but that all, that deserves to be called you, is nothing else, than spirit ; a being spiritual and rational in its nature, that is, as contrary to all fleshly or corporeal beings, as life is contrary to death ; that is made in the image of God, to live forever, never to cease any more ; but to enjoy life, and reason, and knowledge, and happiness in the presence of God, and the society of angels, and glorious spirits, to all eternity.

Every thing, you call yours, beside this spirit, is like your clothing ; something, that is not only to be used a while, and then to end, and die, and wear away, and to signify no more to you, than the clothing and bodies of other people ; but, my children, you are not only in this manner spirits ; but you are fallen spirits, that began your life in a state of corruption and disorder, full of tempers and passions, that blind and darken the reason of your mind, and incline you to that, which is hurtful. Your bodies are not only poor and perishing, like your clothes ; but they are like infected clothes, that fill you with diseases, which oppress the soul with sickly appetites and vain cravings.

So that all of us are like two beings, that have, as it were, two hearts within us ; with the one we see, and taste, and admire reason, purity, and holiness ; with the

other we incline to pride, and vanity, and sensual delights.

This internal war we always feel within us more or less ; and, if you would know the one thing, necessary to all, it is this ; to preserve and perfect all that is rational, holy, and divine in our nature ; and to mortify, remove, and destroy all that vanity, pride, and sensuality, which spring from the corruption of our state:

Could you think, my children, when you look at the world, and see what customs, and fashions, and pleasures, and troubles, and projects, employ the hearts and time of mankind, that things were thus, as I have told you ? But do not be affected at these things ; the world is in a dream, and but few people are awake in it.

We fancy, that we fall into darkness, when we die ; but, alas, we are most of us in the dark till then ; and the eyes of our souls only then begin to see, when our bodily eyes are closing.

You see then your state, my children ; you are to honor, improve, and perfect the spirit, that is within you ; you are to prepare it for the kingdom of heaven ; to nourish it with the love of God and of virtue ; to adorn it with good works, and to make it as holy and heavenly, as you can. You are to preserve it from the errors and vanities of the world ; to save it from the corruptions of the body, from those false delights, and sensual tempers, which the body tempts it with.

You are to nourish your spirits with pious reading and holy meditation, with watchings, fastings, and prayers, that you may desire that eternal state, which is to begin, when this life ends.

As to your bodies, you are to consider them, as perishing things, that are sickly and corrupt at present, and will soon drop into common dust. You are to watch over them, as enemies that are trying to betray you, and so never follow their counsel ; you are to consider them, as the habitation of your souls, and so keep them pure ; you are to consider them as instruments of action, and so give them food, and rest, and raiment, that they may be

strong and healthful, to do the duties of a charitable, useful, pious life.

While you live thus, you live like yourselves ; and whenever you have less regard to your souls, or more regard to your bodies, than this ; whenever you are more intent upon adorning your persons, than upon perfecting your souls ; you are more beside yourselves, than he, that had rather have a laced coat, than a healthful body.

For this reason, my children, I have taught you nothing, dangerous for you to learn ; I have kept you from every thing, that might betray you into weakness and folly ; or make you think any thing fine, but a fine mind ; any thing happy but the favor of God ; or any thing desirable, but to do all the good, you possibly can.

Instead of the immodest entertainment of plays and operas, I have taught you to delight in visiting the sick and poor. What music, and dancing, and diversions are to the world ; that prayer and devotion, and psalms are to you. Your hands have not been employed in plaiting the hair, and adorning your persons ; but in making clothes for the naked. You have not wasted your fortune upon yourselves ; but have added your labor to them, to do more good to other people.

Instead of forced shapes, patched faces, genteel airs, and affected motions ; I have taught you to conceal your bodies with modest garments ; and let the world have nothing to view of you, but the plainness, sincerity, and humility of your behaviour.

You know, my children, the high perfection, and the great rewards of virginity ; you know how it frees from worldly cares, and furnishes means and opportunities of higher advancement in a divine life.

I desire nothing, I press nothing upon you, but to make the most of human life, and to aspire after perfection, in whatever state of life, you choose.

Never therefore consider yourselves, as persons to be seen, admired, and courted by men ; but, as poor sinners, that are to save yourselves from the vanities and follies of a miserable world, by humility, devotion, and

self denial. Learn to live for your own sakes, and the service of God; let nothing be of any value with you, but that, which you can turn into a service to God, and a mean of your future happiness.

Consider often, how powerfully you are called to a virtuous life; and what great and glorious things God has done for you, to make you in love with every thing, that can promote his glory.

Think upon the vanity and shortness of human life, and let death and eternity be often in your minds; for these thoughts will strengthen and exalt your minds; make you wise and judicious, and truly sensible of the littleness of human things.

Think of the happiness of prophets and apostles, saints and martyrs, who are now rejoicing in the presence of God, and see themselves possessors of eternal glory; and then think, how desirable a thing it is, to watch and pray, and do good, as they did; that when you die, you may have your lot among them.

Whether married therefore or unmarried, consider yourselves, as friends and relations to all, that want your assistance; and never allow yourselves to be idle, while others are in want of any thing, your hands can make for them.

This useful, charitable employment of yourselves, is what I recommend to you with great earnestness, as being a substantial part of a wise and pious life. Besides the good you will thereby do to other people, every virtue of your own heart will be much improved by it. For next to reading, meditation, and prayer, there is nothing, that preserves so holy and wise a frame of mind, as some useful employment of ourselves.

Never therefore consider your labor, as an amusement, that is to get rid of your time, and so may be as trifling, as you please; but consider it, as something, that is to be serviceable to yourselves and others; that is to serve some sober ends of life, and make it turn to your account, when the works of all shall be tried by fire.

When you were little, I left you to little amusements,

to please yourselves in any things, that were free from harm ; but as you are now grown up to a knowledge of God and yourselves ; as your minds are now acquainted with the worth and value of virtue, and exalted with the great doctrines of religion ; you are now to do nothing, as children, but despise every thing that is poor, or vain, and impertinent ; you are now to make the labors of your hands suitable to the piety of your hearts, and employ yourselves for the same ends, and with the same spirit, as you watch and pray. For, if there is any good to be done by your labor ; if you can employ yourselves usefully to other people ; how contrary to the wisdom of religion is it, to make that a mere amusement, which might as easily be made an exercise of the greatest charity ?

What would you think of the wisdom of him, that should employ his time in distilling waters, and making liquors, which nobody could use, merely to amuse himself with the variety of their color and clearness ; when, with less labor and expense, he might satisfy the wants of those, who have nothing to drink. Yet he would be as wisely employed, as those, that are amusing themselves with such tedious works, as they neither need, nor know, how to use, when finished ; when, with less labor and expense, they might be doing as much good, as he, that is clothing the naked, or visiting the sick.

Be glad therefore to know the wants of poor people, and let your hands be employed in making such things for them, as their necessities require. By thus making your labor a service to the poor, your ordinary work will be changed into a holy service, and made acceptable to God.

As charity is the greatest of all virtues ; so nothing can make your charity more amiable in the sight of God, than this method of adding your labor to it.

The humility of this employment will be as beneficial to you, as the charity of it. It will keep you from all proud thoughts of your state and distinction in life ; and from treating the poor, as creatures of a different species. By accustoming yourselves to this service to

the poor, as representatives of Jesus Christ, you will soon find your heart softened into meekness and lowliness toward them. You will reverence their condition, think it an honor to serve them, and never be so pleased with yourself, as when you are most humbly employed in their service.

*'This will make you true disciples of your meek Lord, who came into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister ; and, though Lord of all, and among creatures of his own making ; yet was among them, as one, that serveth.*

Christianity has then had its most glorious effects upon your hearts, when it has thus changed your spirit, removed the pride of life from you, and made you delight in humbling yourselves beneath the lowest of your fellow creatures.

Live therefore, my children, as you have begun your lives, in humble labor for the good of others ; and let ceremonious visits, and vain acquaintances, have as little of your time, as you possibly can. Contract no foolish friendships for particular persons ; but love them most, that most turn your love toward God, and your compassion toward all the world.

But above all, avoid the conversation of fops and beaux, and hate nothing more, than the idle discourse, the flattery and compliments of that sort of men ; for they are the shame of their own sex, and ought to be the abhorrence of yours.

When you go abroad, let humility, modesty, and a decent carriage, be all the state, that you take upon you ; and let tenderness, compassion, and good nature, be all the fine breeding, you show in any place.

If evil speaking, scandal, or backbiting, be the conversation, where you happen to be ; keep your heart and tongue to yourself ; be as much grieved, as if among cursing and swearing, and retire as soon as you can.

Though you intend to marry ; yet let the time never come, till you find a man, that has those perfections, which you have been laboring after yourselves ; ~~who is~~



likely to be a friend to all your virtues, and with whom it is better to live, than to want the benefit of his example.

Love poverty, and reverence poor people ; because our blessed Saviour was one of the number, and because you may make them all so many friends and advocates with God for you.

Visit and converse with them frequently ; you will often find simplicity, innocence, patience, fortitude, and great piety among them ; and, where they are not so, your good example may amend them.

Rejoice at every opportunity of doing a humble action, and exercising the meekness of your minds ; whether it be in washing the saints' feet ; or in bearing with the haughtiness of those, that are your equals, or above you. For there is nothing better, than humility ; it is the fruitful soil of all virtues ; and every thing, that is kind and good, naturally grows from it.

Therefore, my children, pray for, and practise humility ; and reject every thing in dress, carriage, or conversation, that has any appearance of pride.

Strive to do every thing, that is praiseworthy ; but do nothing, in order to be praised : nor think of any reward for all your labors of love, till Christ come with his holy angels. Above all, my children, have a care of vain thoughts of your own virtues.

Therefore watch your virtues with a jealous eye, and reject every vain thought, as you would reject wicked imaginations ; and think, what a loss it would be, to have the fruit of your good works devoured by the vanity of your minds.

Never allow yourselves to despise those, who do not follow your rules of life ; but love them, and pray to God for them ; and let humility be always whispering it in your ears, that you yourselves will fall from those rules tomorrow, if God leave you to your own strength and wisdom.

When, therefore, you have spent days and weeks well ; do not suffer your hearts to contemplate any thing, as your own ; but give all the glory to the good-

ness of God, who has carried you through such rules of holy living, as you were not able to observe by your own strength; and begin the next day, not as proficient in virtue, but as beginners, that want the daily assistance of God, to save you from the grossest sins.

Your dear father was a humble, watchful, pious, wise man. While his sickness would suffer him to talk with me, his discourse was chiefly about your education. He knew the benefits of humility; he saw the ruin, which pride made in our sex; and therefore conjured me, with the tenderest expressions, to renounce the fashionable way of educating daughters in pride and softness, in care of their beauty and dress; and to bring you up in the plainest instances of a humble, holy, and industrious life.

He taught me an admirable rule of humility, which he practised all his life; which was this; to let no morning pass, without thinking upon some frailty and infirmity of our own, that may put us to confusion, make us blush inwardly, and entertain a mean opinion of ourselves.

Think therefore, my children, that the soul of your good father, who is now with God, speaks to you through my mouth; and let the double desire of your father, who is gone, and of me, who am with you, prevail on you to love God, to study your own perfection, to practise humility; and, with innocent labor and charity, to do all the good, that you can, to all your fellow creatures, till God calls you to another life.

Thus did the pious widow educate her daughters.

The spirit of this education speaks so plainly for itself, that, I hope, I need say nothing in its justification. If we could see it in life as well, as read of it in books; the world would soon find the happy effects of it.

A daughter, thus educated, would be a blessing to any family; a fit companion for a wise man, and make him happy in the government of his family, and the education of his children; and she, that was not inclined, or could not dispose of herself well in marriage, would

know, how to live to great and excellent ends in a state of virginity.

A very ordinary knowledge of the spirit of Christianity, seems to be enough to convince us, that no education can be of true advantage to young women, but that, which trains them up in humble industry, in great plainness of life, in exact modesty of dress, manners, and carriage, and in strict devotion. For what should a Christian woman be but a plain, unaffected, modest, humble creature ; averse to every thing in her dress and carriage, that can draw the eyes of beholders ?

How great a stranger must he be to the Gospel, who does not know, that it requires this to be the spirit of a pious woman ? Our blessed Saviour saith, *Whosoever looketh upon a woman, to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

Need an education, which turns women's minds to the arts and ornaments of dress and beauty, be more strongly condemned, than by these words ? Surely, if the eye is so easily betrayed ; every art and ornament is condemned, that tends to betray it.

How can a woman of piety more justly abhor and avoid any thing, than that, which makes her person a snare and temptation to other people ? If wanton eyes are the death of the soul ; can women think themselves innocent, who with naked breasts, patched faces, and every ornament of dress, invite the eye to offend ? as there is no pretence for innocence in such a behaviour ; so neither can they tell, how to set any bounds to their guilt. For, as they can never know, how often they have occasioned sin in others ; so they can never know, how much guilt will be placed to their own account.

This, one would think, should deter every pious woman from every thing, that might render her the occasion of loose passions in others.

St. Paul, speaking of a thing entirely innocent, reasons after this manner ; *take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those, that are weak ; and through thy knowledge thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. But, when ye sin so against*

*the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend ; I will eat no flesh, while the world standeth ; lest I make my brother to offend.*

Now, if this is the spirit of Christianity ; if it requires us to abstain from things lawful, innocent, and useful ; when there is any danger of betraying our weak brethren into an error thereby ; surely it cannot be reckoned too nice a point of conscience, for women to avoid such things, as are neither innocent, nor useful ; but naturally tend to corrupt their own hearts and raise ill passions in others.

Surely every woman of Christian piety ought to say, in the spirit of the apostle, if patching, and paint, or any vain adorning of my person, be a natural mean of making weak, unwary eyes to offend ; I will renounce all these arts, lest I make my fellow creatures to offend.

I have considered the nature and necessity of humility, and its great importance to a religious life. I have shown you, how many difficulties are formed against it from our natural temper, the spirit of the world, and the common education of both sexes.

These considerations will, I hope, instruct you, how to form your prayers for it to the best advantage ; and teach you the necessity of letting no day pass without a serious, earnest application to God, for the spirit of humility. Fervently beseeching him, to fill every part of your soul with it, to make it the ruling, constant habit of your mind ; that you may have no thoughts, no desires, no designs, but such, as are the fruit of a humble, meek, and lowly heart. That the whole course of your life, your expense, your house, your dress, your manner of doing every thing, may be so many proofs of the unfeigned humility of your heart ; that you may go through all the actions and accidents of life calmly and quietly, as in the presence of God, looking wholly unto him, acting wholly for him ; neither seeking vain applause, nor resenting neglects, or affronts ; but doing and receiving every thing in the meek and lowly spirit of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## CHAP. XIX.

*Frequency of devotion equally desirable by all orders of people.*

It is reasonable for gentlemen to manage well their estates and families ; but every gentleman and tradesman loses the greatest happiness of his creation ; if he do not live more to piety and devotion, than to any thing else in the world.

Most men of business and figure engage too far in worldly matters ; much farther, than the reasons of human life, or the necessities of the world require. Merchants and tradesmen, are generally ten times farther engaged in business, than they need ; which is so far from being a reasonable excuse for their want of time for devotion, that it must be censured, as a blamable instance of covetousness and ambition.

People of figure either give themselves up to state employments, or to the gratifications of their passions in a life of gaiety ; and, if these things might be admitted, as allowable avocations from devotion ; devotion must be reckoned a poor circumstance of life.

Unless gentlemen can show that they have another God, than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; another nature, than that, which is derived from Adam ; another religion, than the Christian ; it is in vain, to plead their state, and dignity, and pleasures, as reasons for not preparing their souls for God, by a strict and regular devotion.

For, since piety and devotion are the common means of saving souls ; there is nothing left for the gentleman, the soldier, and the tradesman, but to take care that

their several states be, by care and watchfulness, by meditation and prayer, made states of an exact and solid piety.

If a merchant, having forborn from too great business, that he might quietly attend on the service of God, should therefore die worth twenty, instead of fifty thousand pounds; could any one say, that he had mistaken his calling, or gone a loser out of the world?

If a gentleman should have killed fewer foxes, been less frequent at balls, gaming, and merry meetings, because stated parts of his time had been given to retirement, meditation, and devotion; could it be thought, that, when he left the world, he would regret the loss of those hours, he had given to the care and improvement of his soul?

If a tradesman, by aspiring after Christian perfection, and retiring often from his business, should, instead of leaving his children a fortune, to spend in luxury and idleness, leave them to live by their own honest labor; could it be said, that he had made a wrong use of the world, because he had shown his children, that he had more regard to that, which is eternal, than to this, which is so soon to be at an end?

Since, therefore, devotion is not only the most desirable practice in a cloister, but the most desirable practice of men, as men; I cannot see, why every gentleman, merchant, or soldier, should not put these questions seriously to himself; "What is the best thing for me to intend in all my actions? How shall I make the most of human life? What ways, shall I wish that I had taken, when leaving the world?"

Now to be thus wise, and thus to make use of our reason, seems to be but a small and necessary piece of wisdom. For, how can we pretend to judgment; if we dare not seriously consider, and govern our lives by that, which such questions require of us? Shall a nobleman think his birth too high a dignity, to condescend to such questions, as these? Or a tradesman think his business too great, to take care about himself?

Any devotion, that does not procure greater good,

than can be gotten by neglecting it, is freely yielded up. But if people will live in so much ignorance, as never to put these questions to themselves; without ever considering the worth or tendency of their actions; without considering, what God, reason, and their own happiness require of them; it is for the honor of devotion, that none can neglect it, but those, who are thus inconsiderate, who dare not inquire after that, which is the best and most worthy of their choice.

It is true, Claudius, you are a man of figure and estate, and are to act the part of such a station in human life; you are not called, as Elijah was, to be a prophet; nor as Paul, to be an apostle. But will you therefore not love yourself? Will you not study your own happiness, because you are not called, to preach the same things to other people?

You would think it very absurd, for a man not to value his own health, because he was not a physician; or the preservation of his limbs, because he was not a bone setter. Yet it is more absurd for you, Claudius, to neglect the improvement of your soul in piety, because you are not an apostle or a bishop.

Consider this Scripture; *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but, if through the spirit ye do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many, as are led by the spirit of God, they are sons of God.* Do you think that this scripture does not equally relate to all mankind? Can you find any exception here for men of figure and estate? Is not a spiritual life here made the condition, on which all men are to become the sons of God? Will you leave hours of prayer, and rules of devotion, to particular states of life; when nothing, but the same spirit of devotion can save you from eternal death?

Consider again this text; *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things, done in his body, according to that, he hath done, whether it be good, or bad.* Now, if your state would excuse you from appearing before this judgment seat; if your figure could protect you from receiving according to your works; there would be some pretence for your

leaving devotion to other people. But, if you, who are now thus distinguished, must then appear naked among common souls, without any distinction from others, but such, as your virtues or sins give you; does it not as much concern you, as any prophet or apostle, to make the best provision for the best rewards at that great day?

Consider this great doctrine of the apostle; *For none of us liveth to himself; for, whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living.*

Now are you, Claudius, excepted out of the doctrine of this text? Will you, because of your condition, leave it to any particular people, to live and die unto Christ? If so, you must leave it to them to be redeemed by the death and resurrection of Christ. For it is the express doctrine of the text, that for this end Christ died and rose again, that none of us should live to himself. It is not, that priests, or apostles should live no longer to themselves; but that none of us, of what state soever, should live unto himself.

If, therefore, there be any instances of piety, and rules of devotion, which you can neglect, and yet live as truly unto Christ, as if you observed them, this text calls you to no such devotion. But, if you forsake such devotion, as you know becomes people, that live unto Christ, that aspire after great piety; if you neglect such devotion for any worldly consideration, that you may live more to your own taste. more to the fashions of the world; you forsake the terms, on which Christians are to receive the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection.

Observe farther, how the same doctrine is taught by St. Peter; *As he, which hath called you is holy; so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*

If, therefore, Claudius, you are one of those, who are here called; you see, what it is, that you are called to. It is not to have so much religion, as suits your temper, your business, or your pleasure; it is not to a particular sort of piety, that may be sufficient for gentlemen of fig-



ure and estates ; but it is first, to be holy, as he, who hath called you, is holy ; secondly, it is to be thus holy in all manner of conversation ; that is, to carry this spirit of holiness into every part of your life.

The reason, the apostle immediately gives, why this spirit of holiness must be the common spirit of Christians, as such, is very affecting ; and such, as equally calls upon all sorts of Christians. *Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation ; but with the precious blood of Christ, &c.* As if he had said, Forasmuch as ye know ye were made capable of this state of holiness, and made heirs of glory, not by any human means, but by such a mysterious instance of love, as infinitely exceeds every thing, that can be thought of in this world ; since God has redeemed you to himself, at so great a price ; how shameful must it be, if you do not henceforth devote yourselves wholly to God ; and become holy, as he, who hath called you is holy ?

If, therefore, Claudius, in the words of the text, you consider your gold and silver, and the corruptible things of this life, as any reason, why you may neglect a life of strict piety and devotion ; if you think any thing in the world can be an excuse for not imitating Christ in the whole course of your life ; you may make yourself as guilty, as if you should neglect the holiness of Christianity, for the sake of picking straws.

For the greatness of this new state, to which we are called in Christ Jesus, and the greatness of the price, by which we are made capable of this state of glory, has made it as great folly ; as great a contempt of the blood of Christ, to neglect any degree of holiness, because you are a man of some estate and quality, as it would be to neglect it, because you had a fancy to pick straws.

The same apostle saith, *Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you ; and ye are not your own ? For ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

How poorly therefore, Claudius, have you read the scripture? How little do you know of Christianity; if you can yet talk of your estate and condition, as a pretence for a freer kind of life?

Are you any more your own than he, that has no estate or dignity in the world? Must little people preserve their bodies, as temples of the Holy Ghost, by watching and prayer; but may you indulge yours in idleness, and sensuality; because you have so much rent, or such a title of distinction? You must either think thus, or else acknowledge, that the holiness of prophets and apostles is the holiness, that you are to labor after with all diligence and care.

The apostle saith, *You know, how we exhorted, comforted, and charged every one of you, that you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory.*

You perhaps, Claudius, have often heard these words, without thinking, how much they required of you. Yet you cannot consider them, without perceiving to what an eminent state of holiness, they call you.

How can the holiness of the Christian life be set before you in higher terms, than when it is represented to you, as walking worthy of God? Can you think of any abatement of virtue, any neglect of devotion, that well consists with a life, that is to be made worthy of God? Can you suppose that any man walks in this manner, but he, that watches his steps, and considers, how every thing may be done in the spirit of holiness? Yet as high, as these expressions carry this holiness, it is here made the necessary holiness of all Christians. For the apostle does not here exhort his fellow apostles to this holiness, but he commands all Christians, to endeavour after it. *We charged, says he, every one of you, that you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory.* Peter saith, *If any man speak; let him speak, as the oracles of God; if any man minister; let him do it, as of the ability, that God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified in Christ Jesus.*

Do you not here, Claudius, plainly perceive your

high calling? Is he, that speaketh, to have such regard to his words, that he appear to speak, as by the direction of God? Is he, that giveth, to take care, that he so giveth, that, what he disposeth of, may appear to be a gift, that he hath of God? Is all this to be done, that God may be glorified in all things?

Must it not then be said, has any man nobility, or figure in the world? Let him so use his nobility or figure of life, that it may appear, he uses these, as gifts of God, for his glory. Is there any thing forced in this conclusion? Is it not the plain sense of the words, that every thing in life is to be made a matter of holiness to God? If so, then your estate is so far from excusing you from great piety and holiness of life, that it lays you under a greater necessity of living more to the glory of God; because you have more of his gifts, that may be made serviceable to it.

For people therefore of figure, or dignity in the world, to leave piety and devotion to any particular order of men; or such, as they think have little else to do, is to leave the kingdom of God to them. For, it is the very end of Christianity, to redeem all orders of men into one holy society; that rich and poor, high and low, masters and servants, may, in the same spirit of piety, become a *chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that are to show forth the praises of him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

I now proceed to consider the nature and necessity of universal love, here recommended to be the subject of your devotion. You are also called to intercession, as the most proper exercise, to raise and preserve that love. By intercession is meant praying to God for our fellow creatures.

Our blessed Lord hath recommended his love to us, as the pattern of our love to one another. As, therefore, he is continually making intercession for us; so ought we to intercede for one another.

*A new commandment, saith he, I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall*

*all men know, that ye are my disciples ; if ye love one another.*

The newness of this precept did not consist in this, that men were commanded to love one another; for this was an old precept, both of the law of Moses, and of nature. But it was new in this respect, that it was to imitate a new, and till then unheard of example of love ; it was to love one another, as Christ had loved us.

If men are to know, that we are disciples of Christ, by thus loving one another, according to his new example of love ; it is certain, that, if we are void of this love, we make it as plainly known to men, that we are none of his disciples.

There is no principle of the heart, more acceptable to God, than a universal, fervent love to all mankind ; wishing and praying for their happiness ; because there is no principle, that makes us more like God, who is love itself, and created all beings for their enjoyment of happiness.

The greatest idea, we can frame of God, is when we conceive him to be a being of infinite love and goodness ; using infinite wisdom and power for the common good of all his creatures.

The highest notion therefore, we can form of man, is, when we conceive him, as like to God in this respect, as he can be ; using all his finite faculties for the common good of his fellow creatures ; heartily desiring they may have all the happiness, they are capable of ; and as many benefits from him, as his condition in the world will permit him to give them.

On the other hand ; what baseness is there in all instances of hatred ; an illnatured man is the most perverse creature in the world ; acting contrary to that love, by which himself subsists, and which alone gives subsistence to all beings, that enjoy life in any part of the creation. *Whatsoever ye would, that men should do unto you ; even so do unto them.*

Though this is a doctrine of strict justice ; yet it is only a universal love, that can comply with it. For, as

love is the measure of our acting toward ourselves ; so we can never act in the same manner toward other people, till we look upon them with that love, with which we look upon ourselves.

As we have no spite, or envy to ourselves ; so we cannot be disposed toward others, as we are toward ourselves, till we renounce all instances of spite and envy, even in the smallest degree.

If we had any imperfection in our eyes, that made us see any one thing wrong ; for the same reason they would show us a hundred things wrong. So, if we have any temper of our heart, that makes us envious or spiteful toward any one man ; the same temper will make us envious and spiteful toward many more. If, therefore, we desire this divine virtue of love ; we must exercise our hearts in the love of all.

Acts of love, that proceed not from a principle of universal love, are like acts of justice, that proceed from a heart, not disposed to universal justice. A love, which is not universal, may indeed have tenderness and affection ; but it has nothing of righteousness or piety in it ; it is but interest, or such a love, as publicans and heathens practise.

All particular envies are as plain departures from the spirit of Christianity, as any particular acts of injustice.

For it is as much a law of Christ, to treat every body as your neighbour, and to love your neighbour as yourself ; as it is to abstain from theft.

Now the noblest motive to this universal affection, is founded on this doctrine ; *God is love ; and he that dwelleth in him dwelleth in God.* Who therefore, whose heart has any tendency toward God, would not aspire after this divine temper, which so exalts our nature into a union with him.

How should we rejoice in the exercise of this love, which so often, as we feel it, is so often an assurance to us that God is in us ; that we act according to his spirit, who is love itself ? But we must observe, that love then only has this mighty power of uniting us to God,

when it is so pure and universal, as to imitate that love, which God beareth to all his creatures.

God willeth the happiness of all beings ; though it is no happiness to himself. Therefore we must desire the happiness of all beings, though no happiness come to us from it.

God equally delighteth in the perfections of all his creatures ; therefore we should rejoice in those perfections, wherever we see them ; and be as glad, to have other people perfect, as ourselves.

As God forgiveth all, and giveth grace to all ; so we should forgive all those injuries and affronts, which we receive from others, and do all the good, we can, to them.

God Almighty, beside his own great example of love, which ought to draw all his creatures after it ; has so provided for us, and made our happiness so common to us all, that we have no occasion to envy or hate one another.

For we cannot stand in one another's way ; or by enjoying any particular good, keep another from his full share of it. As we cannot be happy, but in the enjoyment of God ; so, we cannot rival, or rob one another of this happiness.

As to other things, the enjoyments and prosperities of this life, they are so little in themselves ; so foreign to our happiness ; and, generally speaking, so contrary to that, which they appear to be ; that they are no foundation for envy or hatred.

How silly would it be, to envy a man who was drinking poison out of a golden cup ? Yet who can say, that he is acting wiser, than thus, when envying any instance of worldly greatness.

How many saints has adversity sent to heaven ? How many poor sinners has prosperity plunged into everlasting misery ? A man seems then to be in the most glorious state ; when he has conquered and humbled his enemy ; though it may be, that same conquest has saved his adversary, and undone himself.

This man had perhaps never been debauched, but for

his fortune and advancement ; that had never been pious, but through his poverty and disgrace.

She, who is envied for her beauty, may perchance owe all her misery to it ; and another may be forever happy, for having had no admirers of her person.

One man succeeds in every thing, and so loses all ; another meets nothing but crosses, and disappointments ; and thereby gains more, than all the world is worth.

This clergyman may be undone by his being made a bishop ; and that may save both himself and others, by being fixed to his first poor vicarage.

How envied was Alexander, when conquering the world ; he built towns, set up his statues, and left marks of his glory in so many kingdoms. How despised was the poor preacher, St. Paul, when he was beaten with rods ! Yet how strangely was the world mistaken in their judgment ! How much to be envied was St. Paul ! How much to be pitied was Alexander !

These few reflections show us, that the different conditions of this life have nothing in them, to excite our uneasy passions ; nothing, that can reasonably interrupt our love and affection to one another.

Our power of doing external acts of love and goodness is often restrained. There are, it may be, but few people, to whom we can contribute any worldly relief.

But, though our outward means of doing good are limited ; yet, if our hearts are full of love and goodness ; we get, as it were, an infinite power ; because God will attribute to us those good works ; those acts of love, which we sincerely desired, and would gladly have performed, had it been in our power.

You cannot heal all the sick, relieve all the poor ; you cannot comfort all in distress ; nor be a father to all the fatherless. You cannot, it may be, deliver many from their misfortunes, or teach them to find comfort in God. But, if the love and tenderness in your heart delight in these good works, and excite you to do all that you can ; if your love has no bounds, but continually wishes and

prays for the relief and happiness of all in distress ; you will be received by God, as a benefactor to those, who have had nothing from you, but your good will and tender affections.

You cannot build hospitals for the incurable ; but, if you join in your heart with those, who do, and thank God for their pious designs ; if you are a friend to these great friends to mankind, and rejoice in their eminent virtues ; you will be received by God, as a sharer of such good works ; though they had none of your hands, yet they had all your heart.

This consideration is sufficient to make us watch over our hearts with all diligence ; to study the improvement of our temper, and aspire after every perfection of a charitable, and benevolent mind.

On the other hand, we may hence learn the great evil and mischief of envy, spite, hatred, and ill-will. For, if the goodness of our hearts will entitle us to the reward of good actions, which we never performed ; it is certain, that the badness of our hearts, our envy and hatred, will bring us under the guilt of actions, we have never committed.

As he, that lusteth after a woman shall be reckoned an adulterer, though he has only committed the crime in his heart ; so the malicious, spiteful, ill natured man, who secretly rejoices at evil, shall be reckoned a murderer, though he has shed no blood.

Since, therefore, our hearts, which are always naked, and open to the eyes of God, give such an exceeding extent to our virtues or vices ; it is our great business, to govern our hearts ; correct, and improve the inward state of our souls.

There is nothing that so much exalts our souls, as this heavenly love ; it purifies, like a holy fire. It makes room for all virtues, and carries them to their greatest height. Every thing that is good and holy, grows out of it ; and it becomes a continual source of holy desires, and pious practices. By love, I do not mean any natural tenderness of constitution ; but I mean a larger principle of the soul, founded in reason and piety, which



makes us kind, and benevolent to all our fellow creatures, as creatures of God.

It is this love, that loves all things in God, as his creatures, as creatures of his goodness, as parts of his family, as members of his society ; that becomes a holy principle of all great and good actions.

The love therefore of our neighbour, is only a branch of our love to God. For, when we love God with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our strength ; we shall necessarily love those beings, that are so nearly related to God, that have every thing from him, and created by him, to be objects of his own eternal love. If I hate or despise any one man in the world, I hate something that God cannot hate, and despise that, which he loves.

Can I think, that I love God with all my heart, while I hate that which belongs only to God, which bears his image, is part of his family, and exists by the continuance of his love toward it ? It was the impossibility of this, that made St. John say, *That, if any man saith, he loveth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.*

If religion requires me to love all persons, as God's creatures, that bear his image, and make parts of his family ; if these are the reasons, why I should live in love and friendship with any one man in the world ; they are reasons, why I should live in friendship with every man in the world ; and consequently I offend against all these reasons, and break through all these obligations, whenever I want love toward any one man. Though many people may appear to us ever so sinful ; we must look upon them with the greater compassion, as being in the most pitiable condition.

As the sins of the world made the Son of God become a compassionate advocate for all mankind ; so none is of the spirit of Christ, but he, who has compassion for sinners. Nor is there any greater sign of your own perfection, than, when you find yourself all compassion toward those, who are weak and defective. On the other hand, you have never less reason to be pleased with yourself, than when you find yourself angry at the

behaviour of others. All sin is certainly to be hated and abhorred, wherever it is ; but we must set ourselves against sin, as we do against sickness and disease, by showing ourselves tender and compassionate to the sick and diseased.

A man naturally fancies, that it is his own exceeding love of virtue, that makes him not able to bear with those, that want it. When he abhors one man, despises another, and cannot bear the name of a third ; he supposes it a proof of his own high sense of virtue, and just hatred of sin. If this had been the spirit of the Son of God ; if he had hated sin in this manner ; there had been no redemption of the world ; if God had hated sinners in this manner, the world itself had ceased long ago.

This therefore we may take for a certain rule, that the more we partake of the divine nature, the more improved we are ourselves ; and the higher our sense of virtue is, the more we shall compassionate those, who want it. The sight of such people will then, instead of raising in us haughty contempt, or peevish indignation toward them, fill us with such bowels of compassion, as when we see the miseries of a hospital.

That the follies and ill behaviour of our fellow creatures may not lessen that tenderness, which we are to have for all mankind ; we should often consider the reasons, on which this duty is founded.

Now we are to love our neighbour, that is, all mankind, not because they are wise, virtuous, or well-behaved ; for all mankind neither ever was, nor ever will be so ; therefore it is certain, that the reason of our being obliged to love them cannot be founded in their virtue.

If their virtue were the reason of our being obliged to love people ; we should have no rule to proceed by ; because, though some people's virtue or vices are very notorious ; yet, generally speaking, we are but very ill judges of the virtue and merit of other people. We are sure, that the virtue or merit of persons, is not the reason of our being obliged to love them ; because

we are commanded to pay the highest instances of love to our enemies ; we are to love, and bless, and pray for those, that most injuriously treat us. This therefore is demonstration, that the merit of persons is not the reason, on which our obligation to love them is founded.

Let us farther consider, what that love is, which we owe to our neighbour. It is to love him, as ourselves, that is, to have all those sentiments toward him, which we have toward ourselves ; to wish him every thing, we may lawfully wish to ourselves ; to be glad of every good, and sorry for every evil, that happens to him ; and be ready to do him all such acts of kindness, as we are always ready to do ourselves.

This love therefore, is nothing else, but a love of benevolence ; it requires nothing of us, but such good wishes, tender affections, and such acts of kindness, as we show to ourselves.

This is all the love, we owe to the best of men ; and we are never to want any degree of this love to the worst, or most unreasonable man in the world.

Now, what is the reason, why we are to love every man in this manner ? It is answered, our obligation to love all men in this manner is founded upon many reasons.

First, upon equity ; for if it is just to love ourselves in this manner, it must be unjust to deny any degree of this love to others ; because every man is of the same nature, and in the same condition, as ourselves.

If, therefore, your own crimes and follies do not lessen your obligation to seek your own good, and wish well to yourself ; neither do the follies and crimes of your neighbour lessen your obligation to wish and seek the good of your neighbour.

Another reason for this love is founded in the authority of God, who has commanded us to love every man, as ourself.

Thirdly, we are obliged to this love, in imitation of God's goodness, that we may be children of our Father in Heaven, who willeth the happiness of all his crea-

tures, and maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good.

Fourthly, our redemption by Jesus Christ calleth us to the exercise of this love ; who came from heaven, and laid down his life, out of love to the whole world.

Fifthly, by the command of our Saviour, who has required us to love one another, as he has loved us.

These are the reasons, on which our obligation to love all mankind, as ourselves, is founded.

These reasons never change ; they always continue in their full force ; and therefore equally oblige at all times, and in regard to all persons.

God loves us, not because we are wise, and good, and holy ; but in pity to us, because we want this happiness ; he loves us, in order to make us good. Our love therefore must take this course ; not requiring the merit of our brethren ; but pitying their disorders, and wishing them all the good, they want, and are capable of receiving.

It appears plainly, that the love, we owe to our brethren, is only a love of benevolence. Secondly, that this duty of benevolence is founded upon such reasons, as never change ; such, as have no dependence upon the qualities of persons. Whence it follows, that it is the same sin, to want this love to a bad man, as to a good man. Because he, that denies this benevolence to a bad man, offends against the same reasons of love, as he does, that denies any benevolence to a good man ; and consequently it is the same sin.

When, therefore, you let loose an ill natured passion, either of hatred or contempt toward an ill man ; consider, what you would think of another, that was doing the same toward a good man ; and be assured, that you are committing the same sin.

You will perhaps say, how is it possible to love a good and a bad man in the same degree ?

Just as it is possible, to be as faithful to a good man, as to an evil man. Are you in any difficulty about performing justice to a bad man ? Are you in any doubt, whether you need be so just to him, as you need be to a good

man? Now, why is it, that you are in no doubt about it? It is because you know, that justice and faithfulness are founded upon reasons, that never change; that have no dependence on the merits of men; but are founded in the nature of things, in the laws of God; and therefore are to be observed with equal exactness toward good and bad men.

Think thus justly of love to your neighbour, that it is founded upon reasons, that vary not, that have no dependence on the merits of men; and then you will find it as possible, to perform the same exact charity, as the same exact justice to all men, whether good or bad.

You will perhaps farther ask, if you are not to have a particular esteem and reverence for good men? It is answered; yes. But this high esteem is a thing, very different from that love, of benevolence, which we owe to our neighbour.

The high esteem, which you have for a man of eminent piety, is no act of charity to him; it is not of pity, that you so reverence him; but it is rather an act of charity to yourself, that such esteem and veneration may excite you to follow his example.

You may, and ought to love and approve the life, which the good man leads; but this is only the loving of virtue, wherever we see it. We do not love virtue with the love of benevolence, as any thing, that wants our good wishes; but as something, that is our proper good.

The whole of the matter is this. The actions you are to love, esteem, and admire, are the actions of good and pious men; but the persons, to whom you are to do all the good you can, are all persons, whether good or bad.

This distinction between love of benevolence, and esteem, or veneration, is obvious. You may perhaps still better see the necessity of it, by this following instance.

No man is to have a high esteem or honor for his own accomplishments, or behaviour; yet every man is to love himself, that is, to wish well to himself; there-

fore this distinction between love and esteem is not only plain, but very necessary to be observed.

If you think it hardly possible to dislike the actions of unreasonable men, and yet have a true love for them ; consider this with relation to yourself.

It is very possible, for you not only to dislike, but to abhor many of your own past actions. But do you then lose any of those tender sentiments toward yourself, which you used to have ? Do you then cease to wish well to yourself ? Is not the love of yourself as strong then, as at any other time ?

Now what is thus possible with relation to ourselves ; is in the same manner possible with relation to others. We may have the highest good wishes toward them, desiring for them every good that we desire for ourselves, and yet at the same time dislike their way of life.

All that love, which we may justly have for ourselves, we are in strict justice obliged to exercise toward other men ; and we offend against the law of our nature, and the law of God ; when our tempers toward others differ from those, we have toward ourselves.

That self love which is just and reasonable, keeps us constantly tender, compassionate, and well affected toward ourselves ; if, therefore, you do not feel these kind dispositions toward other people ; you may be assured, that you are not in that state of charity, which is the life and soul of Christian piety.

You know how it hurts you to be made the jest and ridicule of other people ; how it grieves you to be robbed of your reputation, and deprived of the favorable opinion of your neighbours ; if, therefore, you expose others to scorn and contempt ; if it please you, to see or hear of their frailties ; or if you are loath to conceal their faults ; you are so far from loving such people, as yourself, that you may be justly supposed to have as much hatred for them, as you have love for yourself. For such tempers are as truly the proper fruits of hatred, as the contrary are the proper fruits of love.

As it is a certain sign, that you love yourself, because you are tender of every thing, that concerns you, so it is as certain a sign that you hate your neighbour, when you are pleased with any thing, that hurts him.

But now, if the want of true charity be so great a want, that, as St. Paul saith, it renders our greatest virtues but empty sounds; how highly does it concern us, to study and practise every method of raising our souls to this state of charity?

Such daily, constant devotion is the only mean of preserving you in such a state of love, as is necessary to prove you a true follower of Jesus Christ.

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## CHAP. XX.

*Of the necessity and benefit of intercession, considered as an exercise of universal love. How all orders of men are to pray and intercede with God for one another. How naturally such intercession amends and reforms the hearts of those, that use it.*

THAT intercession is a great and necessary part of Christian devotion is evident from Scripture.

The first followers of Christ seem to support all their love, and to maintain all their intercourse by mutual prayers for one another.

Paul, whether he write to churches, or particular persons, shows his intercession to be perpetual for them.

Thus to the Philippians, *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always, in every prayer of mine for*

*you all, making request with joy.* Here we see continual intercession, performed with so much gladness, as shows, that it was an exercise of love, in which he highly rejoiced.

His devotion had also the same care for particular persons. *I thank my God whom I serve from my forefathers, with a pure conscience, that, without ceasing, I have remembrance of thee in my prayers, night and day.* How holy a friendship was this; how worthy of persons, raised above the world, and related to one another, as new members of a kingdom of heaven!

Apostles did not only thus bless particular churches, and private persons; but they themselves also received grace from God by the prayers of others. Thus saith Paul to the Corinthians, *You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift, bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.*

This was the ancient friendship of Christians, cementing their hearts, not by worldly considerations of human passions, but by mutual communication of spiritual blessings, by prayers and thanksgivings to God for one another.

It was this holy intercession, that raised Christians to such a state of mutual love, as far exceeded all, that had been praised in human friendship. When the same spirit of intercession is again in the world; when Christianity has the same power over the hearts of people, it then had; this holy friendship will be again in fashion, and Christians will be again the wonder of the world, for that exceeding love, which they bear to one another.

For frequent intercession with God, earnestly beseeching him to forgive the sins of all mankind, enlighten them with his spirit, and bring them to everlasting happiness, is the divinest exercise, that the heart of man can be engaged in.

Be daily therefore on your knees in deliberate performance of this devotion, praying for others with such earnestness, as for yourself; and you will find little ill-natured passions die away, your heart grow generous, delighting in the common happiness of others, as you used only to delight in your own.



He, that daily prays to God, that all men may be happy in heaven, takes the likeliest way, to make him wish for their happiness on earth. It is hardly possible to beseech God, to make any one happy in the enjoyment of his glory to all eternity ; and yet be troubled, to see him enjoy the much smaller gifts of God in this low state of human life. How unnatural would it be, to pray God, to grant health and longer life to a sick man ; and at the same time to envy him the poor pleasures of agreeable medicines ? Yet this would be no more unnatural, than to pray God, that your neighbour may enjoy his mercy and favor ; and yet at the same time envy him the little credit he has among his fellow creatures.

When, therefore, you have once habituated your heart to a serious performance of this intercession ; you have done a great deal, to render it incapable of spite and envy, and to make it delight in the happiness of all mankind. This is the natural effect of general intercession for all mankind. But the greatest benefits of it are then received, when it descends to such particular instances, as our state and condition in life more particularly require of us.

Though we are to treat all mankind, as neighbours and brethren ; yet, as we can only live in the actual society of a few, and are by our condition more particularly related to some, than others ; so, when our intercession is made an exercise of love and care for those, among whom our lot is fallen, or who belong to us in a nearer relation ; it then becomes the greatest benefit to ourselves, and produces its best effects in our own hearts. If, therefore, you should always change your intercessions according, as the necessities of your neighbours seem to require ; beseeching God, to deliver them from such or such particular evils, or to grant them this or that particular gift, or blessing ; such intercessions, beside the great charity of them, would have a mighty effect upon your own heart, disposing you to every other good office, and to the exercise of every other virtue toward such persons, as have so often a place in your prayers.

This would make it pleasant to you, to be courteous, and condescending to all about you ; and make you unable to say, or do, a rude thing to those, for whom you had used yourself to be so compassionate in your prayers. For there is nothing, that makes us love a man so much, as praying for him ; and, when you can once do this sincerely for any man ; you have fitted your soul for the performance of every thing, that is kind and civil toward him. This will fill your heart with generosity and tenderness, that will give you a better and sweeter behaviour, than any thing, that is called fine breeding and good manners.

By considering yourself, as an advocate with God for your neighbours, you would never find it hard to be at peace with them yourself. It would be easy to you, to bear with, and forgive those, for whom you particularly implored the divine forgiveness.

Such prayers, among neighbours would unite them to one another in the strongest bonds of love and tenderness. It would ennoble their souls, and teach them to consider one another, as members of a spiritual society, created for the enjoyment of the common blessings of God, and fellow heirs of the same future glory ; they would not only be content, but glad to see one another happy in the little enjoyments of this transitory life. These would be the natural effects of such an intercession among people of the same town or neighbourhood.

Ouranius is a priest, full of the spirit of the gospel, watching, laboring, and praying for a poor country village. Every soul in it is as dear to him, as himself ; and he loves them all, as he loves himself ; because he prays for them all as often, as he prays for himself. If his whole life is one continual exercise of zeal and labor, hardly ever satisfied with any degree of care and watchfulness ; it is because he has learned the value of souls, by often appearing before God, as an intercessor for them.

He never thinks he can do enough for his flock ; because he never considers them in any other view, than as so many persons, who, by receiving the gifts and gra-

ees of God, are to become his hope, his joy, and his crown of rejoicing. He goes about his parish, and visits every body in it ; but visits in the same spirit of piety, that he preaches to them ; he visits them, to encourage their virtues, to assist them with his counsel, to discover their manner of life, and to know the state of their souls, that he may intercede with God for them, according to their particular necessities.

When Ouranias first entered holy orders, he had a haughtiness in his temper, a great contempt for all foolish and unreasonable people ; but he has prayed away this spirit, and has now the greatest tenderness for the most obstinate sinners ; because he is always hoping, that God will sooner or later hear those prayers, that he makes for their repentance. The rudeness, or perverse behaviour of any of his flock, used at first to betray him into impatience ; but it now raises no other passion in him, than a desire to be upon his knees in prayer to God for them.

Thus have his prayers for others amended the state of his own heart. It would delight you, to see with what spirit he converses, with what tenderness he reproveth, with what affection he exhorts, and with what vigor he preaches ; and it is all owing to this, because he reproveth, exhorts, and preaches to those, for whom he first prays to God. This devotion softens his heart, enlightens his mind, sweetens his temper, and makes every thing, that comes from him, instructive, amiable and affecting. At his first coming to this little village, it was as disagreeable to him, as a prison ; and every day seemed too tedious, to be endured in so retired a place. He thought his parish was too full of poor and mean people, who were none of them fit for the conversation of a gentleman.

This put him upon close application to his studies. He kept much at home, wrote notes upon Homer and Plautus ; and sometimes thought it hard, to be called to pray by any poor body, when he was just in the midst of one of Homer's battles. This was his turn of mind, before devotion had got the government of his heart. But now

his days are so far from being tedious, or his parish too great a retirement, that he now only wants more time, to do that variety of good which his soul thirsts after. The solitude of his little parish is become matter of great comfort to him, because he hopes, that God has placed him and his flock there, to make it their way to heaven. He can now not only converse with, but gladly wait upon the poorest kind of people. He is now daily watching over the weak and infirm, humbling himself to perverse, rude, ignorant people, wherever he can find them; and is so far from desiring to be considered, as a gentleman, that he desires to be used, as the servant of all; and in the spirit of his master girds himself, and is glad to kneel down and wash any of their feet. He now thinks the poorest creature in his parish good enough, and great enough to deserve the humblest attendance, the kindest friendship, the tenderest offices, he can possibly show them. He is so far now from wanting agreeable company, that he thinks there is no better conversation in the world, than to be talking with poor people about the kingdom of heaven. These noble thoughts and divine sentiments are the effects of his devotion; he presents every one so often before God in prayer, that he never thinks he can esteem, reverence, or serve those enough, for whom he implores so many mercies from God.

Ouranium is mightily affected with this passage of scripture; *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* This makes him aspire after every instance of piety and righteousness, that his prayers for his flock may avail much with God. For this reason he has sold a small estate and has erected a charitable retirement for poor people to live in prayer and piety; that his prayers, being assisted by such good works, may pierce the clouds, and bring down blessings upon those souls, committed to his care.

Ouranium reads, how God himself said unto Abimelech concerning Abraham, *He is a prophet; he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live;* and how he said of Job; *and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept.*

From these passages Ouranios justly concludes, that the prayers of men, eminent for holiness of life, have an extraordinary power with God ; that he grants to other people such pardon, relief, and blessings, through their prayers, as would not be granted to men of less piety and perfection. This makes Ouranios exceeding studious of Christian perfection, searching after every grace, fearful of every error in his life, lest his prayers for his flock should be less availing with God, through his own defects in holiness.

This makes him careful of every temper of his heart, give alms of all he hath ; and live according to the strictest rules of temperance, meekness, and humility ; that he may be, in some degree, like Abraham, or Job, in his parish, and make such prayers for them, as God will hear and accept.

These are the happy effects, which a devout intercession has produced in the life of Ouranios. If other people, in their several stations, were to imitate this example, in such manner, as suited their particular state of life ; they would certainly find the same happy effects from it.

If masters were thus to remember their servants in their prayers, beseeching God to bless them, and suiting their petitions to the particular wants and necessities of their servants ; the benefit would be as great to themselves, as to their servants. No way is so likely, as this, to inspire them with a true sense of that power, which they have in their hands, to make them delight in doing good, and becoming exemplary in all the parts of a wise and good master. Presenting their servants so often before God, as entitled to the same expectations of heaven, as themselves ; would incline them to treat them, not only with humanity, but with such tenderness, care, and generosity, as become fellow heirs of the same glory. This devotion would make masters inclined to every thing good toward their servants ; be watchful of their behaviour, and as ready to require of them an exact observance of the duties of Christianity, as of the duties of their servants. This would teach them to con-

sider their servants, as God's servants; to desire their perfection, to do nothing before them, that might corrupt their minds; to impose no business upon them, that should lessen their sense of religion, or hinder them from their full share of devotion, public and private. This would make them as glad to see their servants eminent in piety, as themselves. How natural would it be for such a master, to perform every part of family devotion; to have constant prayers; to excuse no one's absence from them; to have the scriptures often read among his servants; to take all opportunities of instructing them, of raising their minds to God, and teaching them to do all their business, as a service to God, and upon the hope and expectation of another life? How natural would it be for such a one to pity their weakness, to bear with the dulness of their understandings; or the perverseness of their temper; to reprove them with tenderness, exhort them with affection, as hoping that God would hear his prayers for them? How impossible would it be for a master, that thus interceded with God for his servants, to use any unkind threatenings toward them, to curse them, as dogs and scoundrels, and treat them, as dregs of the creation. This devotion would give them another spirit, and make them consider, how to make proper returns of care, kindness, and protection to those, who had spent their strength and time in attendance upon them.

If gentlemen think it so low an employment, to exercise such devotion for their servants, let them consider, how far they are from the spirit of Christ, who made himself not only an intercessor, but a sacrifice for the whole race of mankind.

Let them consider, how miserable their greatness would be, if the Son of God should think it as much below him, to pray for them, as they do to pray for their fellow creatures. Let them consider, how far they are from that spirit, which prays for its most unjust enemies; if they have not kindness enough to pray for those, by whose labors they live in ease themselves.

If parents should thus make themselves intercessors

with God for their children ; nothing would be more likely, to dispose their own minds to the performance of every thing, excellent and praise-worthy. The state of parents is in some degree like that of the priesthood, and calls upon them, to bless their children with their prayers to God. Thus Job watched over, and blessed his children, *he sanctified them, he rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings, according to the number of them all.*

If parents, considering themselves in this light, should daily call upon God in a solemn, deliberate manner, extending their intercessions, as the state and growth of their children required ; such devotion would have a mighty influence upon the rest of their lives ; it would make them very circumspect in the government of themselves ; careful of every thing, they said or did ; lest their example should hinder that, which they so constantly desired in their prayers. If a father daily prays to God, that he would inspire his children with true piety, humility, and temperance ; what could be more likely to make the father himself become exemplary in these virtues ? How would he grow ashamed of wanting such virtues, as he thought necessary for his children ? So that his prayers for their piety, would be a mean of exalting his own to its greatest height.

If a father thus considered himself, as an intercessor with God for his children ; what more likely mean to make him aspire after every degree of holiness, that he might thereby be fitter to obtain blessings from heaven for them ? How would such thoughts make him avoid every thing, displeasing to God ; lest when he prayed for his children, God should reject his prayers ? How tenderly, how religiously, would such a father converse with his children, whom he considered, as his little spiritual flock, whose virtues he was to form by his example, encourage by his authority, nourish by his counsel, and prosper by his prayers to God for them ?

How fearful would he be of all unjust ways of raising their fortune, of bringing them up in pride and indulgence, or of making them too fond of the world ; lest he

should thereby render them incapable of those graces, which he was so often beseeching God to grant them.

These being the natural effects of this intercession, no parents, I hope, who have the welfare of their children at heart, will neglect so great a mean of raising their own virtue, and doing an eternal good to those, who are so dear to them, by the strongest ties of nature.

If all people, when they feel the first approaches of resentment, envy, or contempt toward others ; would have recourse at such times to intercession with God, for such persons, as had raised their envy, resentment, or discontent ; this would be a certain way, to prevent the growth of all uncharitable tempers.

The greatest resentments among friends and neighbours often arise from punctilios and little mistakes in conduct. A certain sign, that their friendship is merely human ; not founded upon religious considerations, or supported by such a course of mutual prayer for one another, as the first Christians used. For such devotion must necessarily either destroy such tempers, or be itself destroyed by them. You cannot show any unkind behaviour to a man, for whose welfare you are so much concerned, as to be his advocate with God in private.

Hence we may learn the odious nature of spite, hatred, contempt, and angry passions ; they are not to be considered, as defects in good nature and sweetness of temper ; not, as failings in civility or good breeding ; but, as such base tempers, as are entirely inconsistent with the charity of intercession.

When you despise and ridicule a man, it is with no other end, but to make him ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of other men. How therefore can you sincerely beseech God, to bless that man with his love and favor, whom you desire men to treat, as worthy of contempt.

Could you, out of love to a neighbour, desire your prince to honor him with every mark of esteem and favor ; and at the same time expose him to the scorn and derision of your own servants ? Yet this is as possible, as



to expose that man to the scorn and contempt of your fellow creatures, whom you recommend to the favor of God in your prayers.

From these considerations we may plainly discover the reasonableness of this doctrine; *Whosoever shall say unto his brother, Racha, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.* We are not to believe that every hasty word, or unreasonable expression, that slips from us by chance, or surprise, and is contrary to our intention and temper, is the great sin here signified. But he, that says, Racha, or thou art a fool, must chiefly mean him, that allows himself in deliberate, designed acts of scorn and contempt toward his brother, and in that temper speaks to him, and of him, in reproachful language.

Who would think it hard, that a Christian cannot obtain the favor of God for himself, unless he esteem his brother Christian, as one, that bears the image of God; as one, for whom Christ died, as a member of Christ's body, as a member of that holy society on earth, which is in union with that triumphant church in heaven? Yet all these considerations must be forgot, all these glorious privileges disregarded, before man can treat him, that has them, as an object of contempt. So that to scorn or despise a brother; or, as our Lord says, to call him Racha or fool, must be looked upon, as among the most odious, unjust, and guilty tempers, that can be supported in the heart of a Christian; and justly excluding him from all his hope in the salvation of Jesus Christ. For to despise one, for whom Christ died, is to be as contrary to Christ, as he; that despises any thing, that Christ has said or done.

You would certainly think it a mighty impiety, to treat a writing with contempt, that had been written by the finger of God; and can you think it less impiety to condemn a brother, who is not only the workmanship, but the image of God? You would justly think it great profaneness to trample upon an altar, because it was appropriated to holy uses, and had had the body of Christ so often placed upon it; and can you suppose it to be

less profane to trample upon a brother, who so belongs to God, that his very body is to be considered, as the *temple of the Holy Ghost*?

If you despise a brother, you are chargeable with the impiety of despising him, for whom Christ laid down his life. Now, if this scornful temper is founded upon a disregard of the relations, which every Christian bears to God, and Christ; can you wonder, that a Christian, who thus allows himself to despise a brother, should be in danger of hell fire?

Though in these words, whosoever shall say, thou fool, &c. the great sin, there contemned, is an allowed temper of despising a brother; yet we are also to believe, that all hasty expressions, and words of contempt, though spoken by surprise, are by this text condemned as great sins, and notorious breaches of Christian charity.

They proceed from want of Christian love and meekness, and call for great repentance. They fall as directly under the condemnation of this text, as gross habits of uncharitableness. The reason, why we are to call ourselves to strict repentance for these hasty expressions of anger and contempt, is this; because they seldom are, what they seem to be, that is, mere starts of temper, occasioned purely by surprise or accident; but are much more our own proper acts, than we generally imagine.

A man says a great many bitter things; he presently forgives himself, because he supposes it was only the suddenness of the occasion, that carried him so far beyond himself. But he should consider, that perhaps the surprise, was not the occasion of his angry expressions; but might only be the occasion of his angry temper showing itself. Now, as all haughty, angry language generally proceeds from some secret habit of pride in the heart; so people, that are subject to it, have great reason to repent of more than their present behaviour, and to bring themselves to such mortification, as is proper to destroy a haughty spirit. This may be the rea-

son, why the text looks no farther, than the outward language ; why it only says ; whosoever shall say, thou fool ; because few can proceed so far as to the accidental use of haughty, disdainful language ; but they, whose hearts are full of pride and haughtiness.

Intercession is not only the best promoter of true friendship, the best cure and preservative against angry and haughty passions ; but is also of great use to discover to us the true state of our own hearts.

There are many tempers, which we think innocent ; which, if they were to be tried by this devotion, would soon show us, how we have deceived ourselves.

Susurrus is a pious, temperate, good man, remarkable for abundance of excellent qualities. No one more constant at the service of the church, or whose heart is more affected with it. His charity is so great, that he almost starves himself, to be able to give greater alms to the poor. Yet Susurrus had a prodigious failing with these great virtues. He had a mighty inclination to hear and discover the defects and infirmities of all about him. You were welcome to tell him any thing of any body, provided you did not do it in the style of an enemy. He never disliked an evil speaker ; but when his language was rough and passionate. If you would whisper any thing gently, though it was ever so bad in itself, Susurrus was ready to receive it. When he visits, you generally hear him relating, how sorry he is for the defects and failings of such a neighbour. He is always letting you know, how tender he is of the reputation of his neighbour ; how loath to say that, which he is forced to say ; and how gladly he would conceal it, if it could be concealed.

Susurrus had such a tender manner of relating things, the most prejudicial to his neighbour, that he even seemed, both to himself and others, to be exercising a christian charity, at the same time, he was indulging a whispering, evil speaking temper.

Susurrus once whispered to a particular friend in great secrecy, something too bad, to be spoken of publicly. He ended with saying, how glad he was, that it

had not yet took wind, and that he had some hope it might not be true, though the suspicions were strong. His friend made him this reply ; you say, Susurrus, that you are glad it has not yet taken wind ; and that you have some hope, it may not prove true. Go home therefore to your closet, and pray to God for this man, in such a manner, and with such earnestness, as you would pray for yourself on the like occasion.

Beseech God, to interpose in his favor, to save him from false accusers, and bring all those to shame, who by uncharitable whispers and secret stories, wound him, like those, that stab in the dark. When you have made this prayer, then you may, if you please, tell the same secret to some other friend, that you have told to me.

Susurrus was exceedingly affected with this rebuke, and felt the force of it on his conscience in as lively a manner, as if he had seen the books opened at the day of judgment. All other arguments might have been resisted ; but it was impossible for Susurrus either to reject, or to follow this advice, without being equally self condemned in the highest degree. From that time to this, he has constantly used himself to this method of intercession ; and his heart is so entirely changed by it, that he can now no more privately whisper any thing to the prejudice of another, than he can openly pray to God to do people hurt. Whisperings and evil speakings now hurt his ears, like oaths and curses ; and he has appointed one day in the week, to humble himself before God, in the sorrowful confession of his former guilt. It may well be wondered, how a man of so much piety, as Susurrus, could be so long deceived in himself, as to live in such a state of scandal and evil speaking, without suspecting himself to be guilty of it. But it was the tenderness and seeming compassion, with which he heard and related every thing, that deceived both himself and others. If people of virtue, who think little harm of themselves, as Susurrus did, were often to try their spirit by such an intercession, they would

often find themselves to be such, as they least of all suspected.

I have laid before you the many and great advantages of intercession. You have seen what a divine friendship it must needs beget among Christians ; how dear it would render all relations and neighbours to one another ; how it tends to make clergymen, masters, and parents, exemplary and perfect in all the duties of their station ; how certainly it destroys all envy and ill natured passions ; now speedily it reconciles all differences, and with what a piercing light it discovers to a man the true state of his heart,

These considerations will, I hope, persuade you to make such intercessions, as is proper for your state, a constant matter for your devotion.

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## CHAP. XXI.

*Recommending, as the subject of prayer, resignation to the divine pleasure. The nature and duty of conformity to the will of God in all our actions and designs.*

I HAVE recommended certain subjects to be made the fixed and chief matter of your devotions. As thanksgiving and oblation of yourself to God ; Christian humility ; the graces of universal love ; you are now desired to consider the necessity of resignation and con-

formity to the will of God, and to make this great virtue a principal matter of your prayers.

There is nothing wise, or holy, or just, but the will of God. This is strictly true in the most rigid sense ; as to say, that nothing is infinite and eternal, but God. No beings therefore, in heaven or on earth, can be wise, or holy, or just ; but so far, as they conform to this will of God. It is conformity to this will, that gives virtue and perfection to the highest services of angels in heaven ; and it is conformity to the same will that makes the ordinary actions of men on earth become acceptable service unto God.

The whole nature of virtue consists in conforming to, and the whole nature of vice in declining, from the will of God. All God's creatures are created, to fulfil his will ; the sun and moon obey his will, by the necessity of their nature ; angels conform to his will, by the perfection of their nature. If therefore, you would show yourself not to be an apostate from the order of the creation ; you must act, like beings both above and below you ; it must be the great desire of your soul, God's will may be done by you on earth, as it is done in heaven. It must be the settled intention of your heart, to will nothing, design nothing, do nothing ; but so far, as you have reason to believe, that it is the will of God, that you should so desire, design, and do. It is as just and necessary, to live in this state of heart ; to think thus of God and yourself ; as to think, that you have any dependence upon him. It is as great rebellion against God, to think that your will may ever differ from his ; as to think, that you have not received the power of willing from him. You are therefore to consider yourself, as a being, that has no other business in the world, but to be that, which God requires you to be ; to have no temper, no rules of your own, to seek no self ends ; but to fill some place, and act some part, in strict conformity, and thankful resignation to the divine pleasure. To think, that you are your own, or at your own disposal, is as absurd ; as to think, that you created, and can preserve yourself. It is as plain and

necessary a first principle, to believe you are God's, that you thus belong to him, and are to act and suffer in thankful resignation to his pleasure; as to believe, that in him you live, and move, and have your being.

Resignation to the divine will signifies a cheerful approbation and thankful acceptance of every thing, that comes from God. It is not enough, patiently to submit; but we must thankfully receive, and fully approve of every thing, that by the order of God's providence happens to us. For there is no reason, why we should be patient; but what is as good a reason why we should be thankful. If we were under the hand of a good physician, who could not mistake, or do any thing to us; but what certainly tended to our benefit; it would not be enough, to be patient and abstain from murmuring against such a physician; but it would be as great a breach of duty and gratitude to him, not to be pleased and thankful for what he did, as it would be to murmur at him. Now this is our true state with relation to God; we cannot be said so much, as to believe in him; unless we believe him to be of infinite wisdom. Every argument therefore for patience, under his disposal of us, is as strong an argument for approbation and thankfulness for every thing, he does to us. There needs no more, to dispose us to this gratitude toward God, than a full belief in him, that he is this Being of infinite wisdom, love, and goodness. Do but assent to this truth, in the same manner, as you assent to things, of which you have no doubt; and you will cheerfully approve every thing, that God has already approved for you. For, as you cannot be pleased with the behaviour of any person toward you; but, because it is for your good, is wise in itself, and the effect of his love to you; so, when you are satisfied, that God does not only do that, which is wise, and good, and kind; but that, which is the effect of infinite wisdom and love in the care of you; it will be as necessary, while you have this faith, to be thankful and pleased with every thing, which God chooses for you; as to wish your own happiness.

Whenever, therefore, you find yourself disposed to murmur at any thing, that is the effect of God's providence over you; you must look upon yourself, as denying the wisdom or goodness of God. For every complaint necessarily supposes this. You would never complain of your neighbour; but that you suppose, that you can show either his unwise, unjust, or unkind behaviour toward you. Now every murmuring, under the providence of God, is the same accusation of God. A complaint always supposes ill usage.

Hence also you may see the great necessity and piety of this thankful state of heart; because the want of it implies an accusation of God's want either of wisdom, or goodness, in his disposal of us. It is not therefore any high degree of perfection, founded in any uncommon nicety of thinking, or refined notions; but a plain principle, founded in this plain belief, that God is a being of infinite wisdom and goodness. Now this resignation to the divine will may be considered in two respects. First; as it signifies a thankful approbation of God's general providence over the world. Secondly; as it signifies a thankful acceptance of his particular providence over us.

First, every man is by the law of his creation, obliged to acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of God, in his general providence over the whole world. He is to believe, that it is the effect of God's wisdom and goodness, that the world itself was formed, at such a particular time, and in such a manner. That the general order of nature, the whole frame of things, is contrived and formed in the best manner. He is to believe, that God's providence over states and kingdoms, times and seasons, is all for the best. That the revolutions of state, and changes of empire, the rise and fall of monarchies, persecutions, wars, famines and plagues, are all permitted, and conducted by God's providence, to the general good of man in this state of trial. A good man is to believe all this, with the same assent, as he believes that God is in every place, though he neither sees, nor can comprehend the manner of his pres-



Every one seems to consent to this, as an undeniable truth, *that all things must be, as God pleases*; and is not this enough to make every man pleased with them himself? How can a man be a peevish complainer of any thing, that is the effect of providence, but by showing that his own self wisdom is of more weight with him, than the wisdom of God? What can religion be said to have done for a man, whose heart is in this state? For if he cannot praise God as well in calamities, as in prosperity; he is as far from the piety of a Christian, as he, who only loves those, who love him, is from the charity of a Christian. For to thank God only for such things, as you like, is no more a proper act of piety, than to believe only, what you see, is an act of faith.

Resignation and thanksgiving to God are only acts of piety, when they are acts of faith, trust, and confidence in the divine goodness. The faith of Abraham was an act of true piety; because it stopped at no difficulties, was not altered or lessened by any human appearances. It first of all carried him, from his kindred and country into a strange land, not knowing whither he went. It afterward made him against all appearance of nature, when his *body was dead, when he was about a hundred years old*, depend upon the promise of God, *being fully persuaded, that, what God had promised, he was able to perform*. It was this same faith, that against so many pleas of nature, so many appearances of reason, prevailed upon him to *offer up Isaac*; *accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead*. Now this faith is the true pattern of Christian resignation to the divine pleasure; you are to praise God, not only for the things agreeable to you, that have the appearance of happiness and comfort; but, when you are, like Abraham, called from all appearance of comfort, to be a pilgrim in a strange land, to part with an only son; being as fully persuaded of the divine goodness in all things, that happen to you, as Abraham was of the divine promise, when there was the least appearance of its being performed.

This is true Christian resignation to God, which re-

quires no more to support it, than such a plain assurance of the goodness of God, as Abraham had of his veracity. If you ask yourself, what greater reason Abraham had to depend upon the divine veracity, than you have to depend upon the divine goodness; you will find that none can be given. You cannot therefore look upon this, as an unnecessary, high pitch of perfection; since the want of it implies the want, not of any high notions, but of a plain and ordinary faith in the most certain doctrines both of natural and revealed religion.

Every man is to consider himself, as a particular object of God's providence; under the same care and protection of God, as if the world had been made for him. It is not by chance, that any man is born at such a time, of such parents, and in such place and condition. It is as certain, that every soul comes into the body at such a time, and in such circumstances, by the express designment of God, according to some purposes of his will, and for some particular ends; as that it is by the express design of God, that some beings are angels, and others men. It is as much by the purpose of God, that you should be born in your particular state, and that Isaac should be the son of Abraham, as that Gabriel should be an angel, and Isaac a man. The Scripture assures us, that it was by divine appointment, that our blessed Saviour was born at Bethlehem, and at such a time. Now, although it was owing to the dignity of his person and the great importance of his birth, that thus much of the divine counsel was declared to the world, concerning the time and manner of it; yet we are as sure, from the same Scriptures, that the time and manner of every man's coming into the world is according to some direction of divine providence, and in such time and place and circumstances, as are governed by God for particular ends of his wisdom and goodness. This we are as certain of from revelation, as we can be of any thing. For, if we are told, that not a *sparrow falleth to the ground, without our heavenly Father*; can any thing more strongly teach us, that much greater beings, human souls, come not in-

to the world without the care and direction of our heavenly Father? If it is said, *the very hairs of your head are all numbered*; is it not to teach us, that not the smallest things imaginable happen to us by chance? But if the smallest things are declared to be under the divine direction; can we be more plainly taught, that the greatest things of life, the manner of our coming into the world, our parents, the time, and other circumstances of our birth and condition, are all according to the direction and appointment of divine providence?

When the disciples put this question to our blessed Lord, *Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind*? The eternal wisdom of God made this answer, *Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him*. Plainly declaring, that the particular circumstances of every man's birth, the body, he receives, the condition and state of life, into which he is born, are appointed by a secret providence, which directs all things to their particular times, and manner of existence; that the wisdom and works of God may be made manifest in them all. As, therefore, it is thus certain, that we are what we are, as to birth, time, and condition of entering into the world; since all that is particular in our state, is the effect of God's particular providence over us, and intended for some particular ends of his glory and our own happiness; we are by the greatest obligations of gratitude, called upon to resign our will to the will of God in all these respects; thankfully approving every thing that is particular in our state. Praising his name for our birth of such parents, and in such state and condition; being fully assured, that it was for some reasons of infinite wisdom and goodness, that we were so born in such particular states of life. If the man, abovementioned, was born blind, that the works of God might be manifested in him; had he not great reason to praise God, for appointing him in such a particular manner, to be the instrument of his glory? If one person is born here, and another there; if one falls among riches, and another into poverty; if one receives his flesh and blood from

these parents, and another from those, for as particular ends, as the man was born blind ; have not all people the greatest reason to bless God, and to be thankful for their particular state and condition, because all, that is particular in it, is as directly intended for the glory of God, and their own good, as the particular blindness of that man, who was so born, that the works of God might be manifested in him ?

How noble an idea does this give us of the divine omniscience, presiding over the whole world, and governing such a long chain and combination of seeming accidents and chances to the common and particular advantages of all beings ? So that all persons, in such a wonderful variety of causes, accidents, and events, fall into such particular states, as were foreseen, and foreordained to their best advantage ; and so, as to be most serviceable to the wise and glorious ends of God's government of the world.

Had you been any thing else than what you are, you had been less wisely provided for, than you are now ; you had wanted some circumstances that are best fitted to make you happy yourself, and serviceable to the glory of God. Could you see all that, which God sees ; all that happy chain of causes and motives, which are to move and invite you to a right course of life ; you would see something, to make you like that state, you are in, as fitter for you than any other. But, as you cannot see this ; so it is here, that your Christian faith and trust in God, is to exercise itself, and render you as grateful and thankful for the happiness of your state, as if you saw every thing, that contributes to it with your own eyes. But if this is the case of every man in the world, thus blessed with some particular state, that is most convenient for him ; how reasonable is it for every man to will that, which God has already willed for him ? And by a pious faith and trust in the divine goodness, thankfully adore and magnify that wise providence, which he is sure has made the best choice for him of those things, which he could not choose for himself.

Every uneasiness at our own state is founded on com-

paring it with that of other people. Which is as unreasonable, as if a man in a dropsy should be angry at those, that prescribe different things to him, from those, which are prescribed to people in health. For all the different states of life are like the different states of diseases; what is a remedy to one man in his state, may be poison to another. So that to murmur, because you are not, as some others are, is as, if a man in one disease should murmur, that he is not treated, like him, that is in another. Whereas, if he were to have his will; he would be killed by that, which will prove the cure of another. It is thus in the various conditions of life, if you give yourself up to uneasiness, or complain at any thing in your state; you may, for aught you know, be so ungrateful to God, as to murmur at that very thing, which is to prove the cause of your salvation. Had you it in your power, to get that, which you think it so grievous to want; it might perhaps be that very thing, which would most expose you to eternal damnation. So, that whether we consider the infinite goodness of God, that cannot choose amiss for us, or our own ignorance of what is most advantageous to us; there can be nothing so reasonable and pious, as to have no will, but that of God's; and desire nothing for ourselves, in our persons, state and condition, but that, which the good providence of God appoints us. Farther, as the good providence of God thus introduces us into the world, into such states and conditions of life, as are most convenient for us; so the same unerring wisdom orders all events, and changes in the whole course of our lives, in such manner, as to render them the fittest means, to exercise and improve our virtue. Nothing hurts us, nothing destroys us; but the ill use of that liberty, with which God has entrusted us.

We are as sure, that nothing happens to us by chance as that the world itself was not made by chance; we are as certain, that all things work together for our good, as that God is goodness itself. So that a man has as much reason to will every thing, that happens to him because God wills it; as to think that is wisest

which is directed by infinite wisdom. This is not soothing ourselves into any false content, or imaginary happiness; but is a satisfaction, grounded upon as great a certainty, as the being and attributes of God. For, if we are right in believing God to act over us with infinite wisdom and goodness; we cannot carry our conformity and resignation to the divine will too high; nor can we ever be deceived, by thinking, that to be best for us, which God has brought upon us. For the providence of God is not more concerned in the government of night and day, and the variety of seasons, than in the common course of events, that seem most to depend upon the will of men. So that it is as strictly right, to look upon all worldly changes, all the various alterations in your own life, to be as truly the effects of Divine Providence, as the rising and setting of the sun, or the alterations of the seasons of the year. As you are therefore, always to adore the wisdom of God in the direction of these things; so it is the same reasonable duty, always to magnify God as an equal director of every thing, that happens to you in the course of your own life. This holy resignation and conformity of your will to the will of God, being so much the true state of piety; I hope, you will think it proper to make this hour of prayer, a constant season of applying to God for so great a gift. That by thus constantly praying for it, your heart may be habitually disposed toward it, and always in a state of readiness to look at every thing as God's, and to consider him in every thing; that so every thing, that befalls you, may be received in the spirit of piety, and made a mean of exercising some virtue.

There is nothing, that so powerfully governs the heart, that so strongly excites us to wise and reasonable actions, as a true sense of God's presence.

But, as we cannot see, or apprehend the essence of God; so nothing will so constantly keep us under a lively sense of the presence of God, as this holy resignation, which attributes every thing to him, and receives every thing, as from him.

Could we see a miracle from God, how would our

thoughts be affected with a holy veneration of his presence ! But, if we consider every thing, as God's doing, either by order or permission, we shall then be affected with common things, as they would be, who saw a miracle. For, as there is nothing to affect you in a miracle, but as it is the action of God, and bespeaks his presence ; so, when you consider God, as acting in all things, and all events, then all things will become venerable to you, like miracles, and fill you with the same awful sentiments of the divine presence. Now you must not reserve the exercise of this pious temper, to any particular times or occasions, or fancy how resigned you will be to God, if such or such trials should happen. For this is amusing yourself with the idea of resignation instead of the virtue itself. Do not therefore please yourself with thinking, how piously you would submit to God, in a plague, a famine, or persecution ; but be intent upon the perfection of the present day ; and be assured, that the best way of showing true zeal, is to make little things the occasions of great piety.

Begin therefore in the smallest matters, and accustom your mind to the daily exercise of this pious temper, in the lowest occurrences of life. When contempt, a little injury, or disappointment, or the smallest events of every day, continually raise your mind to God in proper acts of resignation ; then you may justly hope, that you shall be numbered among those, that are resigned and thankful to God in the greatest trials and afflictions.

## CHAP. XXII.

*Of evening prayer. Of the nature and necessity of examination. How we are to confess all our sins. How we are to fill our minds with a just horror of all sin.*

THE evening is a time, so proper for devotion, that I suppose nothing need be said to recommend it, as a season of prayer, to all people, that profess any regard to piety. As the labor and action of every state of life is generally over at this hour; so this is the proper time for every one to call himself to account, and review his behaviour, from the first action of the day. The necessity of this examination is founded upon the necessity of repentance. For, if it be necessary to repent of our sins; if the guilt of unrepented sins still continues upon us; then it is necessary, not only that our sins, but the particular circumstances and aggravations of them, be recollected, and brought to repentance. The scripture saith, *If we confess our sins; he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

There seems therefore to be the greatest necessity, that our daily actions be constantly observed, and brought to account; lest by negligence we load ourselves with the guilt of unrepented sins. This examination therefore every evening is not only to be considered, as a commendable rule, and fit for a wise man to observe; but, as something, that is as necessary, as daily confession and repentance of our sins; because this daily repentance loses its chief benefit, unless it be a particu-



lar confession and repentance of the sins of that day. This examination is necessary to repentance in the same manner, as time is necessary ; you cannot repent or express your sorrow, unless you allow some time for it ; nor can you repent, but so far as you know, what it is, that you are repenting of. So that, when it is said, it is necessary to examine and call your actions to account ; it is only saying, that it is necessary to know, what, and how many things you are to repent of.

You perhaps have hitherto only used yourself to confess yourself a sinner in general, and asked forgiveness in the gross, without any particular remembrance, or contrition for the particular sins of that day. By this practice you are brought to believe, that the same short, general form of confession of sin in general, is a sufficient repentance for every day. Suppose another person should hold that a confession of our sins in general once at the end of every week was sufficient ; and that it was as well to confess the sins of seven days altogether, as to have a particular repentance at the end of every day. I know you sufficiently see the unreasonableness and impiety of this opinion, and that you think it is easy enough to show the danger and folly of it. Yet you cannot bring one argument against such an opinion, but what will be as good an argument against such daily repentance, as does not call the particular sins of that day to a strict account. For, as you can bring no express text of scripture against such an opinion ; but must take all your arguments from the nature of repentance, and the necessity of a particular repentance for particular sins ; so every argument of that kind must as fully prove the necessity of being very particular in our repentance of the sins of every day. Since nothing can be justly said against leaving the sins of the whole week, to be repented for in the gross, but what may as justly be said against a daily repentance, which considers the sins of that day only in the gross.

Would you tell such a man, that daily confession was necessary to keep up an abhorrence of sin ; that the mind would grow hardened and senseless of the guilt of

sin without it? And is not this as good a reason for requiring, that your daily repentance be very express and particular for your daily sins? For, if confession is to raise an abhorrence of sin; surely that confession, which lays open your particular sins; that brings them to light with all their circumstances and aggravations; that requires a particular sorrowful acknowledgment of every sin; must in a much greater degree fill the mind with an abhorrence of sin, than that, which confesses you only to be a sinner in general. For, as this is nothing, but what the greatest saint may justly say of himself; so the daily repeating of such a confession has nothing in it, to make you truly ashamed of your own way of life.

Must you not tell such a man, that by leaving himself to such a weekly, general confession, he would be in great danger of forgetting a great many of his sins? But is there any force in this argument, unless you suppose that our sins are all to be remembered, and brought to a particular repentance? And is it not as necessary, that our particular sins be not forgotten, but particularly remembered in your daily, as in repentance at any other time? So that every argument for daily confession and repentance is the same argument for the confession and repentance of the particular sins of every day. Because daily confession has no other reason or necessity, but our daily sins; and therefore is nothing of what it should be, but so far as it is repentance and sorrowful acknowledgment of the sins of the day.

You would think yourself chargeable with great impiety; if you were to go to bed without confessing yourself to be a sinner, and asking pardon of God; you would not think it sufficient, that you did so yesterday; and yet, if without any regard to the present day, you only repeat the same form of words, you used yesterday; the sins of the present may justly be looked upon to have had no repentance. For, if the sins of the present day require a new confession; it must be such a new confession, as is proper to itself. For it is the state and condition of every day, that is to determine

the state and manner of your repentance in the evening ; otherwise the same general form of words is rather an empty formality, that has the appearance of duty ; than such a true performance of it, as is necessary to make it useful to you.

Let it be supposed, that on a certain day you have been guilty of these sins ; that you have told a vain lie, ascribing something falsely to yourself through pride ; that you have been guilty of detraction, and indulged yourself in some degree of intemperance. Let it be supposed, that on the next day you have lived in a contrary manner ; that you have neglected no duty of devotion, and been the rest of the day innocently employed in your proper business. Let it be supposed, that on the evening of both these days you only use the same confession in general, considering it rather, as a duty, that is to be performed every night, than as a repentance, that is to be suited to the particular state of the day. Can it with any reason be said, that each day has had its proper repentance ? Is it not as good sense, to say, there is no difference in the guilt of these days, as to say that there need be no different repentance at the end of them ? Or how can each of them have its proper repentance, but by its having a repentance as large and extensive, and particular, as the guilt of each day ?

Let it be supposed, that in that day, when you had been guilty of the three notorious sins above mentioned, that in your evening repentance, you had only called one of them to mind ; is it not plain, that the other two are unrepented of, and that therefore their guilt still abides upon you ? So that you are then in the state of him, who commits himself to the night, without the repentance for such a day, as had betrayed him into two such great sins. Now these are not such scrupulous niceties, as a man need not trouble himself about ; but are such plain truths, as essentially concern the very life of piety. For, if repentance is necessary, it is full as necessary, that it might be rightly performed, and in due manner.

If a man is to account for his expenses at night, can it be thought a needless exactness in him, to take notice of every particular expense in the day? If a man is to repent of his sins at night; can it be thought too great a piece of scrupulosity in him, to call to mind, what sins he is to repent of?

Though it be granted, that confession in general be a sufficient repentance for the end of such days, as have only the unavoidable frailties of our nature to lament; yet even this fully proves the absolute necessity of this self examination; for without this examination, who can know that he has gone through any day in this manner?

An evening repentance, which thus brings all the actions of the day to account, is not only necessary, to wipe off the guilt of sin; but is also the most certain way to amend and perfect our lives. For it is only such a repentance, that touches the heart, awakens the conscience, and leaves a detestation of sin upon the mind. For instance; if it should happen, that on any particular evening, all, that you could charge yourself with, should be this, viz. a happy, negligent performance of your devotions, or too much time, spent in an impertinent conversation; if the unreasonableness of these things were fully reflected on, and acknowledged; if you were then to condemn yourself before God for them, and implore his pardon and assisting grace; what could be so likely a mean, to prevent your falling into the same faults the next day? Or, if you should fall into them again the next day; yet, if they were again brought to the same examination and condemnation in the presence of God; their happening again would be such a proof to you of your own folly and weakness, which cause such remorse in your mind, and fill you with such shame and confusion at yourself, as would in all probability make you exceedingly desirous of greater perfection.

Now in the case of repeated sins, this would be the certain benefit, that we should receive from this examination and confession; the mind would thereby be

made humble, full of sorrow and deep compunction, and by degrees forced into amendment.

Whereas a general confession, that is only considered, as an evening duty ; that overlooks the particular mistakes of the day, and is the same, whether the day be spent ill or well ; has little or no effect upon the mind ; a man may use such a daily confession, and yet go on sinning and confessing all his life, without any remorse of mind, or true desire of amendment. For, if your own particular sins are left out of your confession ; your confessing of sin in general has no more effect upon your mind, than, if you had only confessed, that all men in general are sinners. There is nothing in any confession, to show that it is yours, but so far, as it is a self accusation, not of sin in general, or such, as is common to all others ; but of such particular sins, as are your own proper shame and reproach.

No other confession, but such as discovers and accuses your own particular guilt, can be an act of true sorrow or real concern at your condition ; and a confession, that is without this compunction of heart, has nothing in it, to produce in us any true reformation of life.

In order to make this examination still further beneficial, every man should oblige himself to a certain method in it. As every man has something particular in his nature ; stronger inclinations to some vices, than others ; some infirmities, that stick closer to him, and are harder to be conquered than others ; and it is as easy for every man to know this of himself, as to know, whom he likes, or dislikes ; so it is highly necessary, that these particularities of our nature and temper should never escape a severe trial at our evening repentance ; because nothing, but a rigorous severity against these natural tempers, is sufficient to conquer them.

They are the right eyes, that are not to be spared ; but to be plucked out, and cast from us. For, as they are the infirmities of nature ; so they have the strength of nature ; and must be treated with great opposition, or they will soon be too strong for us. He therefore, who knows himself most of all subject to anger, must

be very exact in his examination of this temper every evening. He must find out every slip, that he has made of that kind, in thought, word, or action ; he must reproach and accuse himself before God, for every thing, that is said or done in obedience to his passion. He must no more allow himself to forget the examination of this temper, than to forget his whole prayers.

If you find that vanity is your prevailing temper ; never spare or forget this temper in your evening examination ; but confess to God every vanity of thought, or word, or action, that you have been guilty of, and put yourself to shame and confusion for it. In this manner should all people act with regard to their chief frailty. And though it should not immediately do all, they wish ; yet by constant practice it will in a short time produce its desired effect.

As all states and employments of life have their particular temptations, and expose people more to some sins, than others ; so every man should make it a necessary part of his evening examination, to consider, how he has avoided, or fallen into such sins, as are most common to his state of life. For, as our condition of life has great power over us ; so nothing but such watchfulness, can secure us from those temptations, to which it daily exposes us. The poor man is always in danger of repining and uneasiness ; the rich man is most exposed to sensuality and indulgence ; the tradesman to lying and unreasonable gain ; the scholar to pride and vanity ; so that, in every state of life, a man should always in his examination of himself, have a strict eye upon those faults, to which his state of life most exposes him.

As it is reasonable to suppose that every good man has proposed to himself some method of holy living, and set himself some such rules to observe, as are not common to other people, and only known to himself ; so it should be a constant part of his night recollection, to examine, in what degree he has observed them, and to reproach himself before God for every neglect of them. By rules I mean such rules, as prescribe a certain order to our business, devotion, reading, retirement, conversation, meals, refreshments, sleep, and the like.—Now, as good

rules, relating to these things, are certain means of improvement; they will hardly ever be observed to any purpose, unless they are made the constant subject of our evening examination.

You are not to content yourself with a hasty, general review of the day, but you must enter upon it with deliberation; begin with the first action of the day, and proceed step by step, through every particular matter, you have been concerned in; and so let no time, place or action be overlooked. An examination, thus managed, will in a little time make you as different from yourself, as a wise man is different from an idiot. It will give you such a newness of mind; such a spirit of wisdom, and desire of perfection; as you were an entire stranger to before.

I proceed now to lay before you such considerations, as may fill your mind with a just dread of all sin, and help you to confess your own in contrition and sorrow of heart. Consider first, how odious all sin is to God; what a baseness it is, and how abominable it renders sinners in the sight of God. That it is sin alone, that makes the great difference between an angel and the devil; that sin is a greater blemish and defilement of the soul, than any filth or disease is of the body; and to live in sin is a much greater baseness, than to wallow in the mire, or love any bodily impurity.

Consider, how you must abhor a creature, that delighted in nothing, but filth and nastiness; that hated every thing decent and clean; and let this teach you to apprehend, how odious that soul, that delights in nothing, but the impurity of sin, must appear unto God. For all sins, whether of sensuality, pride or falseness, or any other irregular passion, are nothing else, but filth and disease of the soul; and all righteousness is nothing else, but the purity, decency, beauty and perfection of that spirit, which is made in the image of God.

Learn, what horror you ought to have for the guilt of sin, from the greatness of that atonement, which has been made for it. God made the world by the breath of his mouth; but the redemption of the world has been a work of longer labor. How easily God can create

beings, we learn from the first chapter of Genesis ; but how difficult it is for infinite mercy to forgive sin, we learn from that costly atonement, those bloody sacrifices, those pains and penances, those sicknesses and death, which must be undergone, befor the sinner is fit to appear in the presence of God.

Ponder these great truths ; that the Son of God was forced to become man, to be partaker of our infirmities ; to undergo a painful, miserable, and contemptible life ; to be persecuted, hated, and at last nailed to a cross ; that the bloody sacrifices of the Jewish law, were to represent the necessity of this great sacrifice, and the displeasure, God bore to sinners ; that the world is still under the curse of sin, and certain marks of God's displeasure at it ; such, as famine, plagues, tempest, sickness, diseases, and death.

Consider, that all the sons of Adam are to go through a painful, sickly life, mortifying their natural appetites, and crucifying the lust of the flesh, in order to have a share in the atonement of our Saviour's death ; that their tears and repentance are only made available by that great intercession, which is still making for them at the right hand of God.

Consider. these great truths ; that this redemption, these sacrifices and sufferings are only to remove the guilt of sin ; and let this teach you, with what tears and contrition, you ought to purge yourself from it. After this general consideration of the guilt of sin, which has done so much mischief to your nature, and exposed it to so great punishment, and made it so odious to God, that nothing less, than so great an atonement of the Son of God, and so great repentance of our own, can restore us to the divine favor.

Consider next your own particular share in the guilt of sin ; and if you would know, with what zeal you ought to repent yourself ; consider how you would exhort another sinner to repentance ; and what repentance and amendment you would expect from him, whom you judged to be the greatest sinner in the world.

The greatness of our guilt arises chiefly from the



greatness of God's goodness toward us, from the particular blessings, favors, the light, and instruction, we have received from him.

Now, as these blessings, and the multitude of God's favors toward us, are the great aggravations of our sins against God ; so they are only known to ourselves. Therefore every sinner knows more of the aggravation of his own guilt, than he does of other people's ; and consequently may justly look upon himself to be the greatest sinner, that he knows.

How good God hath been to other sinners ; what light and instruction, he has vouchsafed to them ; what blessings and graces they have received from him ; you cannot tell. But all this you know of yourself ; therefore you know greater aggravations of your own guilt, and are able to charge yourself with greater ingratitude, than you can charge upon other people ; and this is the reason, why the greatest saints have in all ages condemned themselves, as the greatest sinners ; because they knew some aggravations of their own sins, which they could not know of other people's. The right way therefore to fill your heart with true contrition, and a deep sense of your own sins, is this ; you are not to compare the outward course of your life, with that of other people's, and then think yourself to be less sinful, than they ; because the outward course of your life is less sinful, than theirs. But, in order to know your own guilt, you must consider your own particular circumstances, your health, your sickness, your youth, or age, your particular calling, the happiness of your education, the degrees of light and instruction, you have received ; the good men, you have conversed with ; the admonitions, you have had ; the good books, you have read ; the numberless divine blessings and favors, you have received ; the good motions of grace, you have resisted, the resolutions of amendment, you have so often broken ; and the checks of conscience, you have disregarded. As you only know these circumstances of your own sins ; so you must necessarily know, how to charge yourself with higher degrees of guilt,

than you can charge upon other people. God Almighty knows greater sinners, it may be, than you are ; because he sees and knows the circumstances of all men's sins ; but your own heart, if it is faithful to you, can discover no guilt so great, as your own ; because it can only see in you those circumstances, on which a great part of the guilt of sin is founded. You may see sins in other people, that you cannot charge upon yourself ; but then you know a number of circumstances of your own guilt, that you cannot lay to their charge. Perhaps that person, who appears at such a distance from your virtue, and so odious in your eyes, would have been much better, than you are ; had he been altogether in your circumstances, and received the same favors from God, you have.

This is a very humbling reflection, and very proper for those people to make, who measure their virtue, by comparing the outward course of their lives with that of others. For, look at whom you will, however different from you in his way of life ; yet you can never know that he has resisted so much grace, as you have ; or that, in your circumstances, he would not have been much truer to his duty, than you are. This is the reason, why I desired you to consider, how you would exhort that man to confess, and bewail his sins, whom you looked upon to be one of the greatest sinners. Because, if you will deal justly ; you must fix the charge at home, and look no farther, than yourself. For God has given no one any power of knowing the true greatness of any sins, but his own ; and therefore the greatest sinner, that every one knows, is himself. You may easily see, how such a one, in the outward course of his life, breaks the laws of God ; but then you can never say, that, had you been in his circumstances, you should not have broken them more, than he has. Serious and frequent reflection on these things will tend to humble us in our own eyes, make us very apprehensive of the greatness of our own guilt, and very tender in censuring other people, for who would dare to be severe against other people, when, for aught he can tell, the severity of God may be more

due to him, than to them? Who would exclaim against the guilt of others, when he considers, that he knows more of the greatness of his own guilt, than he does of theirs? How often you have resisted God's holy Spirit! How many motives to goodness you have disregarded; how many particular blessings you have sinned against; how many good resolutions you have broken; how many checks and admonitions of conscience you have stifled, you very well know. But how often this has been the case of other sinners, you know not. Therefore the greatest sinner, you know, must be yourself.

Whenever, therefore, you are angry at sin; whenever you think of God's indignation and wrath at wicked men; let this teach you to be the most severe in your censure, and most humble and contrite in the acknowledgment and confession of your own sins, because you know of no sinner, equal to yourself.

Having thus examined and confessed your sins, you must afterward look upon yourself, as obliged to betake yourself to prayer. The subject, most proper for your prayers, is death. Let your prayers therefore then be upon the danger, uncertainty and terror of death; let them contain every thing, that can awaken your mind into just apprehensions of it. Let your petitions be for right sentiments of the approach and importance of death; and beg of God, that your mind may be possessed with such a sense of its nearness, that you may have it always in your thoughts; do every thing, as in sight of it; and make every day, a day of preparation for it. Represent to your imagination, that your bed is your grave; that all things are ready for your interment; that you are to have no more to do with this world; and that it will be owing to God's great mercy; if you ever see the light of the sun again, or have another day, to add to your works of piety. Then commit yourself to sleep, as into the hand of God; as one, who is to have no more opportunities of doing good; but is to awake among spirits, that are separate from the body, and waiting for the judgment of the great day.

Such a solemn resignation of yourself into the hand of God every evening, and parting with the world, as if you were never to see it any more ; and this in the silence and darkness of the night, is a practice, that will soon have excellent effects upon your spirit. For this time of the night is exceeding proper for such prayers and meditations ; and the likeness, which sleep and darkness have to death, will contribute to make your thoughts about it more deep and affecting.

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## CHAP. XXIII.

*The conclusion. Of the excellency and greatness of a devout spirit.*

I HAVE now finished, what I intended in this Treatise. I have explained the nature of devotion, as it signifies a life devoted to God, and a regular method of daily prayer. I have only to add a word or two in recommendation of a life, governed by this spirit of devotion. For, though, it is as reasonable, to suppose it the desire of all Christians, to arrive at Christian perfection ; as to suppose that all sick men desire to be restored to perfect health ; yet experience shows us, that nothing wants more to be pressed, repeated, and forced upon minds, than the plainest rules of Christianity. Christian perfection is tied to no particular form of life ; but is to be attained in every state of

life. This has been fully asserted in another place; where it has been shown, that christian perfection calls no one to a cloister, but to the performance of those duties, which are necessary for all Christians, and common to all states of life. The thing, here pressed upon all, is a life of great and strict devotion; which, I think, has been sufficiently shown to be equally the duty and happiness of all orders of men. Neither is there any thing in any particular state of life, that can be justly pleaded, as a reason for any abatement of a devout spirit.

But, because in this polite age we have so lived away the spirit of devotion, that many seem afraid, even to be suspected of it; imagining great devotion to be great bigotry, founded in ignorance and poorness of spirit; and that weak and dejected minds, are generally the greatest proficient in it; it shall here be fully shown that great devotion, is the noblest temper of the greatest and noblest souls; and that they, who think it receives any advantage from ignorance and poorness of spirit, are entirely ignorant of the nature of devotion, of God, and of themselves.

People of fine parts and learning, or of great knowledge in worldly matters, may perhaps think it hard, to have their want of devotion charged upon their ignorance. But, if they will be content to be tried by reason and scripture; it may soon be made to appear, that want of devotion, either among the learned or unlearned is founded in gross ignorance, and the greatest blindness and insensibility, that can happen to a rational creature. Devotion is so far from being the effect of a little and dejected mind, that it must and will be always highest in the most perfect natures. Who reckons it a sign of a little mind, for a man to be full of reverence and duty to his parents; to have the truest love and honor for his friend; or to excel in the highest instances of gratitude to his benefactor? Are not these tempers in the highest degree in the most exalted and perfect minds? Yet, what is high devotion, but the highest exercise of duty, reverence, love, honor, and gratitude to the amiable, glorious parent, friend and benefactor of all man-

kind? Is it true greatness of mind, to reverence the authority of your parents, to fear the displeasure of your friend, to dread the reproaches of your benefactor? And must not this fear, and dread, and reverence, be much more just and reasonable, and honorable, when they are in the highest degree toward God? As the higher these tempers are, the more they are esteemed among men, and are allowed to be so much the greater proofs of true greatness of mind; so the higher and greater these same tempers are toward God; so much the more do they prove the nobility, excellence, and greatness of the mind. So that so long, as duty to parents, love to friends, and gratitude to benefactors, are thought great and honorable; devotion, which is duty, love and gratitude to God, must have the highest place among our highest virtues.

If a prince, of his mere goodness, should send you a pardon by one of his slaves; would you think it a part of your duty, to receive the slave with marks of love, esteem and gratitude, for his great kindness in bringing you so great a gift; and at the same time think it meanness of spirit, to show love, esteem, and gratitude to the prince, who of his own goodness freely sent you the pardon? Yet this would be as reasonable, as to suppose that love, esteem, honor, and gratitude, are instances of a great soul, when they are paid to our fellow creatures; but the effects of a poor, ignorant, dejected mind, when they are paid to God.

That part of devotion, which expresses itself in confession, and penitential tears of a broken heart, is far from being a sign of a little and ignorant mind. For who does not acknowledge it an instance of an ingenious, generous, and brave mind, to acknowledge a fault, and ask pardon for the offence? Are not the finest and most improved minds the most remarkable for this excellent temper? Is it not also allowed, that the ingenuity and excellence of a man's spirit is much shown, when his indignation at himself rises in proportion to the folly of his crime, and the goodness and greatness of the person, he has offended? Now, if things are thus; then the greater any

man's mind is ; the more he knows of God and himself ; the more will he be disposed to prostrate himself before God in humblest acts and expressions of repentance.

The greater the ingenuity, generosity, judgment, and penetration of his mind is ; the more will he indulge a tender sense of God's just displeasure ; and, the more he knows of the greatness, goodness, and perfection of the divine nature ; the fuller of shame and confusion will he be at his sins and ingratitude. On the other hand, the more dull and ignorant any soul is ; the more base and ungenerous, the more senseless it is of the goodness and purity of God ; so much the more averse will it be to all acts of humble confession and repentance.

Devotion therefore is so far from being best suited to little, ignorant minds ; that true elevation of soul, a lively sense of honor, and great knowledge of God and ourselves, are the greatest natural helps, that our devotion hath.

On the other hand, it shall here be made to appear, by variety of arguments, that indevotion is founded in excessive ignorance.

Our blessed Lord and his apostles were eminent instances of great and frequent devotion. Now, if we will grant, that their great devotion was founded in true knowledge of the nature of devotion, of God, and of man ; then it is plain, that those, that are insensible of the duty of devotion, are in this state of ignorance ; they neither know God, nor themselves, nor devotion. For, if a right knowledge in these three respects produces great devotion, as in the case of our Saviour and his apostles ; then neglect of devotion must be chargeable upon ignorance.

How comes it, that most people have recourse to devotion, when they are in sickness, distress, or fear of death ? Is it not, because this state shows them more want of God, and their own weakness, than they perceive at other times ? Is it not, because their infirmities, their approaching end, convinces them of something, which they did not half perceive before ? Now

if devotion at these seasons is the effect of a better knowledge of God, and ourselves ; then the neglect of devotion at other times is always owing to ignorance of God, and ourselves.

As indevotion is ignorance ; so it is the most shameful ignorance ; and such, as is to be charged with the greatest folly. This will fully appear to any one, that considers, by what rules we are to judge of the excellency of any knowledge, or the shamefulness of any ignorance. Now knowledge itself would be no excellence, nor ignorance any reproach to us ; but that we are rational creatures. But, if this be true ; then it follows plainly, that that knowledge, which is most suitable to our rational nature, and which most concerns us, as such to know ; is our highest, finest knowledge ; and that ignorance, which relates to things, most essential to us, as rational creatures, and which we are most concerned to know, is the most shameful ignorance. If, therefore, there be any things, that concern us more, than others ; if there be any truths, that are more to us, than all others ; he, that has the fullest knowledge of these things ; that sees these truths in the clearest, strongest light ; has, as a rational creature, the clearest understanding and the strongest parts. If, therefore, our relation to God, be our greatest relation ; if our advancement in his favor be our highest advancement ; he, that has the highest notions of the excellence of this relation ; he that most strongly perceives the highest worth, and great value of holiness and virtue ; that judges every thing little, when compared with it ; proves himself to be master of the best, and most excellent knowledge. If a judge had fine skill in painting, architecture, and music ; but at the same time had gross notions of equity, and poor apprehensions of the value of justice ; who would scruple to reckon him a poor, ignorant judge ? If a bishop should be a man of great address and skill in the arts of preferment ; and understanding how to raise and enrich his family in the world ; but should have no sense of the maxims and principles of the saints and fathers of the church ? if he did not conceive the



holy nature, and great obligations of his calling ; and judge it better, to be crucified to the world, than to live idly in pomp and splendor ; who would scruple to charge such a bishop with want of understanding ? If we do not judge, and pronounce after this manner, our reason and judgment are but empty sounds. But now, if a judge is to be reckoned ignorant ; if he does not feel or perceive the value and worth of justice ; if a bishop is to be looked upon, as void of understanding ; if he is more experienced in other things, than in the exalted virtues of his apostolical calling ; then all common Christians are to be looked on, as more or less knowing, according as they know more or less of those great things, which are the common and greatest concern of all Christians. If a gentleman should fancy, that the moon is no bigger, than it appears to the eye ; that it shines with its own light ; that all the stars are only so many spots of light ; if, after reading books of astronomy, he should still continue in the same opinion ; most people would think he had but a poor apprehension. But, if the same person should think it better to provide for a short life here, than to prepare for a glorious eternity hereafter ; that it was better, to be rich, than to be eminent in piety ; his ignorance and dullness would be too great to be compared to any thing else.

There is no knowledge, that deserves so much, as the name of it, but that, which we call judgment. That is the most clear and improved understanding, which judges best of the value and worth of things.

There is no excellence of any knowledge in us, till we exercise our judgment, and judge well of the value of things. If a man had eyes, that could see beyond the stars, or pierce into the heart of the earth ; but could not see the things before him, or discern any thing, that was serviceable to him ; we should reckon, that he had a very bad sight. If another had ears, that received sounds from the world in the moon, but could hear nothing, that was done upon earth ; we should look upon him as bad, as deaf. In like manner, if a man has a memory, that can retain a great many things ;

if he has a wit, that is acute in arts and sciences; or an imagination, that can wander agreeably in fictions; but has a dull apprehension of his duty and relation to God; of the value of piety; or the worth of moral virtue; he may very justly be reckoned to have a bad understanding. He is like the man, that can only see and hear such things, as are of no benefit to him. As certain, therefore, as piety, virtue, and eternal happiness are of the most concern to man; as certain as the immortality of our nature, and relation to God, are the most glorious circumstances of our nature; so certain is it, that he, who dwells most in contemplation of them; whose heart is most affected with them; who sees farthest into them; who best comprehends the value and excellency of them; who judges all worldly attainments to be mere bubbles and shadows, in comparison of them; proves himself to have the finest understanding, and the strongest judgment. If we do not reason after this manner; we have no arguments to prove that there is any such thing, as a wise man or a fool. For a man is proved to be a fool; not, because he wants any of his senses, or is incapable of every thing; but, because he has no judgment, and is entirely ignorant of the value of things; he will perhaps choose a fine coat rather, than a large estate. As the essence of stupidity consists in the entire want of judgment, of the value of things; so, on the other hand, the essence of wisdom must consist in the excellency of our judgment, or in the knowledge of the value of things. This therefore is an undeniable proof, that he, who knows most, the value of the best things; who judges most rightly of the things which are of most concern to him; who had rather have his soul in a state of Christian perfection, than the greatest share of worldly happiness; has the highest wisdom. On the other hand, he, who is more concerned to get a name, or an estate here, than to live in eternal glory hereafter, is in the nearest state to him, who chooses a painted coat rather, than a large estate. He must appear to God, and heavenly beings, as in a more excessive state of stupidity; and will sooner or later certainly appear so to himself.

If this be undeniably plain ; then it is plain, that we cannot prove a man to be wise ; but by showing, that he has the fullest knowledge of his greatest good, and his greatest evil. If, therefore, God be our greatest good ; if there can be no good, but in his favor ; nor any evil, but in departing from him ; then it is plain, that he, who judges it the best thing, to please God to the utmost of his power ; who adores him with all his heart and soul ; who had rather have a pious mind, than all the dignities in the world ; shows himself to be in the highest state of human wisdom.

We know, how our blessed Lord acted in a human body ; it was *his meat and drink, to do the will of his Father, who is in heaven.* If any number of heavenly spirits were to leave their habitations in the light of God, and be for a while united to human bodies ; they would certainly tend toward God in all their actions, and be as heavenly, as they could, in a state of flesh and blood.

They would certainly act in this manner ; because they would know, that God was the only good of all spirits ; and that, whether they were in the body or out of the body, in heaven or on earth, they must have every degree of their greatness and happiness from God alone. All human spirits therefore, the more exalted they are ; the more they know their divine original ; the nearer they come to heavenly spirits ; by so much the more will they live to God in all their actions, and make their whole life a state of devotion. Devotion therefore is the greatest sign of a great and noble genius ; it supposes a soul in its highest state of knowledge ; and none, but little and blinded minds, sunk into ignorance and vanity, are destitute of it.

If a human spirit should imagine some mighty prince to be greater, than God ; we should take it for a poor, ignorant creature ; all would acknowledge such an imagination to be the height of stupidity. But, if this same human spirit should think it better, to be devoted to some mighty prince, than to God ; would not this still be a greater proof of a poor, ignorant, and blinded nature ? Yet this is, what all people do, who think any

thing better, greater, or wiser, than a devout life. So that it plainly appears, that devotion is an instance of great judgment, of an elevated nature ; and want of devotion is a certain proof of want of understanding. The greatest spirits of the heathen world ; such as Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Epictetus, Marcus, Antoninus, &c. owed all their greatness to the spirit of devotion. They were full of God ; their wisdom and deep contemplations tended only to deliver men from the vanity of the world, the slavery of bodily passions ; that they might act, as spirits, that came from God, and were soon to return to him.

To see the dignity and greatness of a devout spirit, we need only compare it with other tempers, that are chosen in the room of it. St. John tells us, that *all in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*. Let us therefore consider, what wisdom or excellency of mind is required, to qualify a man for these delights. Let us suppose a man given up to the pleasures of the body ; surely this can be no sign of a fine mind, or an excellent spirit ; for, if he has but the temper of an animal, he is great enough for these enjoyments. Let us suppose him to be devoted to honor and splendor, to be fond of glitter and equipage ; now, if this temper required any great parts, to make a man capable of it ; it would prove the world to abound with great wits. Let us suppose him to be in love with riches, and to be so eager in the pursuit of them, as never to think he has enough ; now this passion is so far from supposing excellent sense, or great understanding, that blindness and folly are its best supports. Let us suppose him in another light, not singly devoted to any of these passions ; but, as it mostly happens, governed by all of them in their turns ; does this show a more exalted nature, than to spend his days in the service of any one of them ? For to have a taste for these things, and to be devoted to them, is so far from arguing understanding, that they are suited to the dullest, weakest minds ; and require only a great deal of pride

and folly, to be greatly admired. But let libertines bring any such charge, as this, if they can, against devotion. They may as well endeavour to charge light with every thing, that belongs to darkness. Let them grant, that there is a God, and Providence; and then they have granted enough, to justify the wisdom, and support the honor of devotion. For, if there is an infinitely wise and good Creator, in whom we live, move, and have our being; whose providence governs all things in all places; surely it must be the highest act of our understanding, to conceive rightly of him; it must be the noblest instance of judgment; the most exalted temper of our nature; to worship and adore this universal Providence; to conform to its laws; to study its wisdom; and to live and act every where, as in the presence of this infinitely good and wise Creator. Now he, that live thus, lives in the spirit of devotion; and what can show so fine an understanding, as to live in this temper. For, if God is wisdom; surely he must be the wisest man in the world, who most conforms to the wisdom of God; who best obeys his providence; who enters farthest into his designs; and does all, he can, that God's will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. A devout man makes a true use of his reason; he sees through the vanity of the world; discovers the corruption of his nature, and the blindness of his passions. He lives by a law, which is not visible to vulgar eyes; he enters into the world of spirits; he compares the greatest things, sets eternity against time; and chooses rather to be forever great in the presence of God, when he dies, than to have the greatest share of worldly pleasures, while he lives. He, who is devout, is full of these great thoughts; lives upon these noble reflections; and conducts himself by rules and principles, which can only be apprehended, admired, and loved by reason. There is nothing therefore, that shows so great a genius; nothing, that so raises us above vulgar spirits; nothing, that so plainly declares an heroic greatness of mind; as great devotion. When you suppose a man to be a saint, or all devotion; you have raised him as much

above all other conditions of life, as a philosopher is above an animal.

Courage and bravery are words of a great sound, and seem to signify a heroic spirit ; but yet humility, which seems to be the lowest part of devotion, is a more certain argument of a noble and courageous mind. For humility contends with greater enemies, is more constantly engaged, more violently assaulted, bears more, suffers more, and requires greater courage, to support itself, than any instances of worldly bravery. A man who dares to be poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world, to approve himself to God ; who rejects all human glory, who opposes the clamor of his passions, who meekly puts up all injuries and wrongs, and dares stay for his reward, till the invisible hand of God gives to every one their proper places ; endures a much greater trial, and exerts a nobler fortitude, than he, who is bold and daring in the fire of battle. For the boldness of a soldier, if he is a stranger to the spirit of devotion, is rather weakness, than fortitude ; it is at best but mad passion, and has no more true valor in it, than the fury of a tiger. For, as we cannot lift up a hand, but by a power, lent us from God ; so bold actions not directed by the laws of God, are no more true bravery, than sedate malice is Christian patience.

Reason is our universal law, that obliges us in all places, and at all times ; and no actions have any honor, but so far as they are instances of our obedience to reason. It is as base and cowardly, to be bold and daring against the principle of reason and justice, as to be bold and daring in lying and perjury.

Would we, therefore, exercise true fortitude ; we must do all in the spirit of devotion ; be valiant against the corruptions of the world, and the lusts of the flesh, and the temptations of the devil ; for to be daring and courageous against these enemies is the noblest bravery, a human mind is capable of.

I have made this digression, for the sake of those, who think great devotion to be bigotry and poorness of spirit ; that by these considerations they may see, how

poor and mean all other tempers are, if compared to it. That they may see, that all worldly attainments, whether of greatness, wisdom, or bravery, are but empty sounds; and there is nothing wise, or great, or noble in a human spirit, but rightly to know, and heartily to worship and adore the great God, who is the support and life of all spirits, whether in heaven or on earth.

## APPENDIX.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM THE REV. WILLIAM LAW, IN ANSWER TO ONE, REQUESTING A CONVERSATION ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

As to your intencion of a visit here, I can say nothing, to encourage it; and, though my countenance would have no forbidding airs put on by myself; yet, as old age has given me her own complexion, I might perhaps bear the blame of it. But my chief objection against a visit of this kind, is the reason, you give for it, viz. ; for my instructive conversation on the *spiritual life*. An appointment for religious conversation has a taking sound; and passeth for a sign of great progress in goodness. But, with regard to myself, such a meeting would rather make me silent, than a speaker in it; first, because I hurt myself, and am only acting a part, if I speak to persons on *spiritual* matters, either sooner or further, than the *Spirit of God* (which bloweth when and where it listeth) would be resisted in me, if I held my tongue; secondly, because it is deluding the persons, I speak to, and helping them to be content with an imaginary falsehood, if, as a *spiritual* assistant, I speak to them of any thing, but that, which is their own evil, or their own good; for true edification arises only from such knowledge, and not from devout harangues on the *spiritual life* in general, though set forth in the most enlivened words. The *spiritual life* is nothing else, but the working of the *Spirit of God* within us; and therefore our own silence must be a great part of our preparation for it; and much speaking, or a delight in it, will be often no small hindrance of that good, which we can only have from hearing, what the *Spirit and Voice of God* speaketh within us. This is not enough known



by religious persons ; they rejoice in kindling a fire of their own, and delight too much in hearing their own voice ; and so lose that inward unction from above, which alone can new create their hearts. To speak with the tongues of men or angels on religious matters is a much less thing, than to know, how to stay the mind upon God, and abide with him in the closet of our hearts, observing, loving, adoring, and obeying his holy power within us.

Rhetoric, and fine language about the things of the Spirit, is a vainer babble, than in other matters ; and he, who thinks to grow in true goodness by hearing or speaking flaming words or striking expressions, as is now much the way of the world, may have a great deal of talk, but will have but little of his " conversation in heaven."

I have written very largely of the *spiritual life* ; and he, who has read it and likes it, has of all men the least reason to ask me any questions, or make any visit on that subject.

He understands not my writings, nor the end of them, who does not see that their whole drift is to call all Christians to God and Christ within them, as the only possible life, light, and power of all goodness, they can ever have ; and therefore they turn my readers as much from myself, as from any other, " Lo here ! or Lo there !"

I invite all people to " The marriage of the Lamb," but no one to myself.

Your humble Servant,

W. L.







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